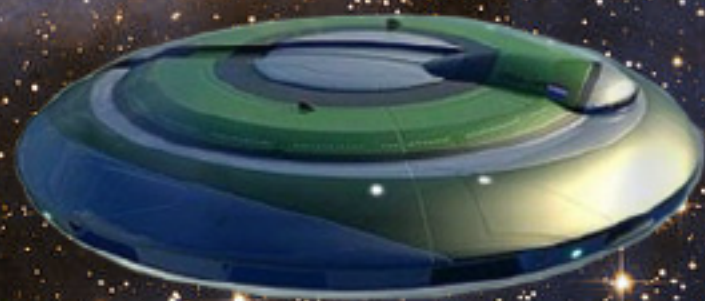


RAMPA

FUTURE PAST

FUTURE PERFECT

Featuring Two Complete
And Corrected Books:
As It Was and I Believe



Lobsang Rampa

Introduction by Tim Swartz
Prelude by William Kern

FUTURE PAST —FUTURE PERFECT

How brightly we burn in our time. How brightly! But was the Architect who struck this fire so derisive as to extinguish the flame forever at the final trembling exhalation?

The heavens burn with the fires of a billion stars that, one by one, explode into darkness. As above, so below, we are admonished. Inhale. Exhale. Burn. Oxidize.

Oh, how brightly we might burn if we could but believe we might burn forever. How brightly! And might we not? The mighty kings of old believed that, once their fire faded here, they became stars of the heavens. And once the fire of their star failed in heaven, they became again men of Earth. Can it be so?

There is just this much fire. The Architect can hold it all in one hand and it wouldn't weigh an ounce.

Inhale. Exhale. Sleep. Burn.

The mystery of our self-extinguishing fire lies in the force it doesn't use; its ability to find its way to the far side of the Architect's multiverse while, with irresolute ambivalence, unable to comprehend the Architect's complex formula—that stultifying equation of zeros to the billionth power—a part of us simply stands sullenly and watches the fire explode into darkness.

Yet, how brightly we burn in our time!

Can it be by accident alone that we are here, wherever it is that we have fallen? Can it be that our fire made its way across light years of elsewhere only to discover the portal opened upon little more than a murky swamp?

Tiniest of things seen only under a microscope, burning with defiant fire, seeking the dry land, reaching for the wide, imperious sky, streaming one by one into the vast burning forest, coiling and gleaming one upon the other in shafts of light until they are lost in the greening shade. Wind and rain did not perplex them. Scudding clouds borne by burning air, hurrying shadows beneath, did not perplex them.

Is that what we were? Have we come so far from the dim shadows of the forest that we can no longer remember how brightly we burned there; storm and dust forgotten, the corroded wheels of time all broken and laid aside?

Or were we never that? Were we more? (Why can't we remember?) Or Less? Or nothing at all even now? Was there always only the Architect's Fire burning brightly in the immortal furnace? (And why can't we remember?)

RAMPA: FUTURE PAST—FUTURE PERFECT

Lobsang Rampa

Introduction by Tim Swartz

Prelude by William Kern

Featuring Two Rampa Books

As It Was

I Believe

Edited and Corrected by William Kern

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RAMPA: FUTURE PAST—FUTURE PERFECT

TWO COMPLETE BOOKS

AS IT WAS* and *I BELIEVE

By Lobsang Rampa

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EXAMINING THE STRANGE WORLD OF DR. T. LOBSANG RAMPA

by Tim Swartz

It was a time when people were questioning their beliefs. Christianity and organized religion seemed stagnant and out of touch with a new generation who were seeking spiritual truths rather than undefined platitudes. People were seeking answers, but no one knew what the question was.

The time was ripe for a new beginning, and from the other side of the world a fresh breeze was blowing that would herald in a new age of understanding for teachings that were thousands of years old, but offered a new hope for those who were looking for ultimate truth.

In 1956 *The Third Eye* hit the stands with an amazing story that was allegedly the autobiography of a young Tibetan noble, Tuesday Lobsang Rampa, who, at the age of seven was sent to the Chakpori medical lamasery. *The Third Eye* details Rampa's early life at Chakpori where he was taught the secrets of Tibetan religion and the mystical arts. Rampa's own psychic abilities were helped to develop when he underwent an operation of the third eye, in which a hole was drilled in his forehead. This dangerous procedure opened a closed up part of the brain to the energies of the universe, releasing its potential and enabling it to grow beyond the boundaries of physical reality.

The Third Eye was an almost instant success. In the first year it sold over 60,000 copies and was translated into German, French and Norwegian. Even though skeptics universally panned the book, the public was eager to read about the exotic secrets of Tibet and the ancient ways of Eastern philosophy and religion.

In the 1950s Tibet was in the headlines due to the Chinese invasion of Eastern Tibet in 1949, and their total annexation of the country in 1951. Before that time little was known about the Himalayan country, its people and their beliefs. But as people fled before the Chinese occupation, they brought with them their rich customs which fanned the flames of interest in the West about anything Tibetan.

A WORLD IN TURMOIL

The release of The Third Eye could not have come at a more perfect time. World War Two was still fresh in the minds of Europeans who had borne the brunt of the worst that humankind could perpetuate upon itself. The Church offered little solace to those who survived and were left to wonder how a God who was supposed to be watching out for the world could allow such horrible things to happen. It seemed as if everything that people had been brought up to believe in, to trust, had let them down. Governments, leaders, the Church, had done nothing to stop the horrors of war, and in fact appeared to embrace the evil with no regard to those who would suffer the most.

People were disillusioned with authority. The Church preached “have faith,” but could really offer no other answers to why the world was as it was. In fact, the Church blamed the victims on why bad things happen. “All men are born with original sin” said the Ministers. “It does not matter how good you are or how many good and unselfish deeds you do; you are born a sinner and will die a sinner.” This is hardly inspirational words to those who are seeking real answers.

The Third Eye, however, revealed a whole new world to those seekers. It offered a spiritual and philosophical system that resonated in a way that Christianity and Western ideals did not.

Even more appealing, it offered an easy access point for those Western minds dulled by years of materialism and instant gratification that might not have been able to grasp the intricacies of Eastern mysticism.

The Third Eye allowed a whole new generation to learn that there is more to this world, this universe, than had been taught to them by modern science and traditional Christianity. It started a new movement of understanding that is still with us today. All thanks to one controversial writer.

CONTROVERSY

It was not long before controversy embroiled the Rampa movement. Perhaps due to The Third Eyes popularity, there were those who felt it was their duty to bring down the growing movement before it threatened the Church and possibly political systems. A group of scholars living in Britain were certain that Rampa was a fraud, so they hired a detective by the name of Clifford Burgess to determine the validity of Rampa’s tale. It is now known that this effort was financed by a group representing not only the Church of England, but also high level British Government officials who were worried that interest in Eastern religions would undermine democracy in the Western world.

Clifford Burgess discovered that T. Lobsang Rampa had never been to Ti-

bet, nor had he ever had any operation done to his forehead. Instead Rampa was actually Cyril Henry Hoskins, born in Devon, England, and son of a plumber named Joseph Henry Hopkins.

When the press confronted Hoskins with this revelation, Hoskins freely admitted that he had never “physically” been to Tibet. In reply to his critics, Rampa stated: “The Third Eye is absolutely true and all that I write in that book is fact. I, a Tibetan lama, now occupy what was originally the body of a Western man, and I occupy it to the permanent and total exclusion of the former occupant. He gave his willing consent, being glad to escape from life on this earth in view of my urgent need. One should not place too much credence in ‘experts’ or ‘Tibetan Scholars’ when it is seen how one ‘expert’ contradicts the other, when they cannot agree on what is right and what is wrong, and after all how many of those ‘Tibetan scholars’ have entered a lamasery at the age of seven, and worked all the way through the life as a Tibetan, and then taken over the body of a Westerner? I HAVE.”

The public, however, continued to believe in Rampa and to buy his books. Rampa’s subsequent books give more details of experiences which he encountered after the period covered by *The Third Eye*. He included stories about Chinese atrocities against Tibetan monks and lamas, ancient civilizations, encounters with the Yeti, gilded mummies of an extraterrestrial super race, and hidden cities deep within lost caverns. What makes Rampa’s books especially popular is his practical esoteric teachings from which the ordinary person can learn and develop spiritually.

In his later books, Rampa even wrote about UFOs and life on other planets. Two controversial books are *My Visit to Venus*, originally published by Gray Barker, and *My Visit to Agharta*, published by Inner Light Publications. Both of these books have been criticized by Rampa’s followers who are unaware of his interest in UFOs and extraterrestrials. However, those familiar with his later writings are certain that both books were written by him, but were possibly withheld from publication due to their controversial nature. Only by reading the books can the reader make the judgment for themselves.

Truth is, very few of the Rampa books were ever made available in the U.S.; with several exceptions the majority of them were printed and distributed solely in the U.K. where Rampa made his home most of his life. Now deceased for well over a decade his works have been largely ignored by an entirely new generation of metaphysically and occult minded readers. It was only through the foresight of William Kern at Kerson Publishing Company that a decision was made to bring a few of Rampa’s most controversial works to this “side of the pond” so that open minded readers might tackle the ideas that the lama put forth.

These initial works included, *Between Two Worlds*, featuring “The Third

Eye” and “Doctor From Lhasa;” ***World Of Illusions*** featuring “The Rampa Story” and Cave of the Ancients;” ***Secrets of the Ages*** featuring “Living With the Lama” and “The Saffron Robe;” ***The Arrow of Time*** featuring “Candlelight” and Twilight;” and ***Time in the Stone*** featuring “The Hermit” and “The Tibetan Sage.”

In keeping with Rampa’s traditional values and to quell a continued thirst for more of his books, we feel it is time to shed more light onto a darkening world with the release of **WISDOM OF THE MASTERS** featuring “You Forever” and “Wisdom of the Ancients;” and **THE BOOK OF LIFE**, featuring “Chapters of Life” and “Beyond The Tenth;” **THE YEARS OF MILK AND TAR** featuring “Feeding The Flame” and “The Thirteenth Candle; and **FUTURE PAST—FUTURE PERFECT**, featuring “As It Was” and “I Believe,” concerning subjects few dared to tackle in his lifetime.

Publisher Kern has promised reissue other of Rampa’s earlier works if there is sufficient demand for this catalog of information.

“Hopefully,” says Kern, “these composite books will start a new trend and there will be a clarion call to bring Rampa’s works back into print. Perhaps this will start a new movement of spiritual seekers eager to move away from the world where terrorism, first strike initiatives, end time fanatics, global pollution and rampant materialism has replaced the inner peace and harmony that Rampa saw as our birthright.”

We can say with almost certainty that Rampa’s works are ageless and his wisdom is needed now more than ever. He saw a New Age emerging, and perhaps we can still promote his vision of a Brave New World.

COMPILER’S NOTE: Two of Rampa’s books are contained in this single volume. The texts were carefully proofed to correct a number of scanning and editing errors which have been found in all editions of the books that were republished after the originals went out of print. Duplicated paragraphs, sentences and paragraphs that were misplaced, and spelling errors have been corrected to provide today’s interested readers with the most compete and accurate editions of Rampa’s books that it is possible to produce.

We will continue to proof and correct earlier editions of Rampa’s books and hope to produce all of them by the end of 2015.

William Kern-DBA: Kerson Publishing Company

PRELUDE

Who can separate their faith from their actions, or their belief from their occupations?

Who can spread their hours before them, saying, "This for my love and this for myself; this for my spirit and this other for my body"?

All your hours and days and years are but wings that beat through space and time from one self to another.

Whosoever wears their mortality as their best garment were better naked, for the wind and the sun will tear no holes in their skin.

And whosoever defines their conduct by ethics imprisons their song-bird in a cage, for the freest song comes not through bars and wires.

In reverie you cannot rise above your achievements nor fall lower than your failures. In adoration you cannot fly higher than your hopes nor humble yourself lower than your despair. And if you would know Peace, be not a solver of riddles.

Rather look about you and you shall see your love running and laughing with the children. Look into space; you shall see him hovering in the cloud, outstretching his arms in the lightning and descending in rain. You shall see him smiling in flowers, then rising and waving his hands in trees.

You would know the secret of death? But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?

The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light. If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life, for life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.

In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond; and like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams of spring.

Trust the dreams, for in the dreams is hidden the gate to eternity.

What is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun? And what is it to cease breathing but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek Joy unencumbered?

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing, and when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb, and when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.

Now it is evening, and Eva said, "It is a glorious day for your spirit has come to me and spoken."

And he answered, "Was it I who spoke only? Did I not also listen?"

Then the Avatar descended the steps to the river Lethe and all his comrades and friends followed him.

And he reached his ship and stood upon the deck, and facing the friends again, he raised his voice and said: "People of Earth, the wind bids me leave you. Less hasty am I than the wind, yet I must go. We wanderers, ever seeking the lonelier way, begin no day where we have ended another day; and no sunrise finds us where sunset left us. Even while the earth sleeps we travel. We are the seeds of the tenacious plant, and it is in our ripeness and our fullness of heart that we are given to the wind and are scattered.

"My days among you were brief, and briefer still the words I have spoken. But should my voice fade in your ears, and my love vanish in your memory, then I will come again, and with a richer heart and lips more yielding to the spirit will I speak. Yes, I shall return with the tide, and though death may hide me, and the greater silence enfold me, yet again will I seek your understanding.

"I go with the wind, friends of Earth, but not down into emptiness; and if this day is not a fulfillment of your needs and my love, then let it be a promise 'til another day. Know, therefore, that from the great silence I shall return.

"The mist that drifts away at dawn, leaving but dew in the fields, shall rise and gather into a cloud and fall as rain, and not unlike the mist have I been. In the stillness of the night I have walked in your streets, and my spirit has entered your houses, and your heart-beats were in my heart, and your breath was upon my face, and I knew you all.

"Aye, I knew your joy and your pain, and in your sleep your dreams were my dreams, and oftentimes I was among you as a lake among the mountains. I mirrored the summits in you and the bending slopes, and even the passing flocks of your thoughts and your desires. And to my silence came the laughter of your childhood, and the longing of your youth. And when they reached my depth the streams and the rivers were singing still.

“But sweeter still than laughter and greater than all longing, you, my love, are boundless in me, and in beholding all these things of Earth I beheld you and loved you. For what distances can love reach that are not in that vast sphere? What visions, what expectations and what presumptions can outsoar that flight?

“And though this heavy-grounded ship awaits the tide upon these shores, yet, even like an ocean, we can neither hasten our tides nor wish them away. And like the seasons we are also, and though in our winter we deny our spring, yet spring, reposing within, smiles in her drowsiness and is not offended.

Think not I say these things in order that you may say the one to the other, “He praised us well. He saw but the good in us.”

“I only speak to you in words of that which you yourselves know in thought.

“I have found that which is greater than wisdom. It is a flame spirit in you ever gathering more of itself, while you, heedless of its expansion, bewail the withering of your days. It is life in quest of life in bodies that fear the grave.

“But, my darling rosebud, there are no graves on that distant shore. These mountains and plains are a cradle and a stepping-stone. Whenever you pass by the field where you have laid your ancestors look well thereupon, and you shall see yourselves and your children dancing hand in hand with your mother and father.

“Less than a promise have I given, perhaps, and yet more generous have you been to me. You have given me my deeper thirsting after life.

“Surely there is no greater gift to a man than that which turns all his aims into reality and all life into a fountain. And in this lies my honor and my reward, that whenever I come to the fountain to drink I find the living water itself thirsty; And it drinks me while I drink it.

“You are not enclosed within your bodies, nor confined to houses or fields. That which is you dwells above the mountain and roves with the wind. It is not a thing that crawls into the sun for warmth or digs holes into darkness for safety, but a thing free, a spirit that envelops the earth and moves in the ether.

“If these be vague words, then seek not to clear them. Vague and nebulous is the beginning of all things, but not their end, and I would have you remember me as a beginning. Life, and all that lives, is conceived in the mist and not in the crystal. And who knows but a crystal is mist in decay?

“This would I have you remember in remembering me:

“That which seems most gentle and bewildered in you is the strongest and most determined. Is it not your breath that has erected and hardened the struc-

ture of your bones? And is it not a dream which none of you remember having dreamt, that built your city and fashioned all there is in it? Could you but see the tides of that breath you would cease to see all else, and if you could hear the whispering of the dream you would hear no other sound.

“But you do not see, nor do you hear, and it is well. The veil that clouds your eyes shall be lifted by the hands that wove it, and the clay that fills your ears shall be pierced by those fingers that kneaded it.

“And one day you shall see. And one day you shall hear.

“Yet you shall not deplore having known blindness, nor regret having been deaf. For in that day you shall know the hidden purposes in all things, and you shall bless darkness as you would bless the light.”

After saying these things the Avatar looked about him, and he saw Charon, the pilot of his ship, standing by the helm and gazing now at the billowing sails and now at the distance.

And he said:

“Ah, patient, over patient, is the captain of my ship. The wind blows, and the sails are restless; even the rudder begs direction; yet quietly my captain awaits my silence. And these my mariners, who have heard the choir of the greater sea, they too have heard me patiently. Now they shall wait no longer. I am ready.

“The river has reached the sea, and once more the great mother holds her son against her breast. Fare you well, people of Earth. This day has ended. It is closing upon us even as the water-lily upon its own tomorrow. What was given us here we shall keep, and if it suffices not, then again must we come together and together stretch our hands unto the giver. Forget not that I shall come back to you.

“A little while, and my longing shall gather dust and foam for another body. A little while, my darling rosebud, a little while longer; a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me.

“Farewell to you and the youth I have spent with you. It was but yesterday we met in a dream. You have sung to me in my aloneness, and I of your longings have built a tower in the sky. But now our sleep has fled and our dream is over, and it is no longer dawn. The noontide is upon us and our half waking has turned to fuller day, and we must part. If in the twilight of memory we should meet once more, we shall speak again together and you shall sing to me a sweeter song. And if our hands should meet in another dream we shall build another tower in the sky.

“Kiss me now as I go so that when I awaken on that far shore, I will remember what lulled me so gently to sleep: the touch of your lips on mine.”

So saying he made a signal to the seamen, and straightaway they weighed anchor and cast the ship from its moorings, and they moved eastward. And a cry came from the comrades and friends as from a single heart, and it rose into the dusk and was carried out over the sea like a great chorus.

Only Eva was silent, gazing after the ship until it had vanished into the mist. And when all the people had gone, she stood alone upon the sea-wall, remembering in her heart his saying: "A little while, my darling rosebud, a little while longer; a moment of rest upon the wind, and another woman shall bear me."

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I am Tuesday Lobsang Rampa. That is my only name, it is now my legal name, and I answer to no other. Many letters come to me with a weird conglomeration of names attached; they go straight in the waste paper basket, for, as I say, my only name is Tuesday Lobsang Rampa.

All my books are true, all my claims are absolutely true. Years ago the newspapers of England and Germany started a campaign against me at a time when I was not able to defend myself because I was almost dying from coronary thrombosis. I was persecuted without mercy, insanely.

Actually a few people were jealous of me, and so they collected "evidence," but it is significant that "the collector of evidence" at no time tried to see ME! It is unusual not to give "an accused person" a chance to state his own story. A person is innocent until proved guilty; I was NEVER "proved guilty," and never permitted to prove myself GENUINE!

The newspapers of England and Germany would not give me any space in their columns, so I have been in the unfortunate position of knowing that I was innocent and truthful, but unable to tell anyone my side of the story. One great television chain of stations offered me an interview, but they INSISTED that I say what they thought I should say, in other words, a lot of lies. I wanted to tell the truth, so they would not let me appear.

Let me again state that everything that I have written is true. All my claims are true. My specific reason for insisting that all this is true is that in the near future other people like me will appear, and I do not desire that they should have the suffering that I have had through spite and vicious hatred.

A large number of people have seen my absolutely authentic papers which prove that I have been a high Lama of the Potala in Lhasa, Tibet, and that I am a qualified Doctor of Medicine trained in China. Although people have seen those papers they "forgot" when the press came prying around.

Will you, then, read my books bearing in mind my positive assurance that

the whole thing IS TRUE? I am what I claim to be. What am I! Read my books and you will see!

T. Lobsang Rampa.

AS IT WAS!

Dedicated to The City of Calgary, where I have had peace and quiet and freedom from interference in my personal affairs. Thank you, City of Calgary.

AS IT WAS!

Book One - As it was in the Beginning

Book Two - The First Era

Book Three - The Book of Changes

Book Four - As it is Now!

FOREWORD . . .

All “the best” books have a Foreword, so it is very necessary that THIS book have one. After all., Authors are quite entitled to regard their own books as The Best. Let me start The Best with an explanation of WHY I chose my title.

“As It Was!” Now why would he use such a silly title?

He says in other books that he ALWAYS writes the truth. Sure, sure, you shall have your explanation, so just Keep Calm (should be in six-inch capitals) and READ ON.

All my books ARE true, and I have maintained that fact in face of relentless persecution and calumny. But throughout the ages sane, sensible people have been persecuted and even tortured and killed for telling it As It was!

A Very Wise Man was almost burnt at the stake for daring to assert that the Earth revolved around the Sun instead of—as the Priests taught—that the Earth was the centre of Creation and all planets revolved around it. The poor fellow had a terrible time, being stretched on the Rack and all that, and saved being cooked only by recanting.

Then there have been people who inadvertently levitated at the wrong moment in front of the wrong people with the wrong results; they have been bumped off in various spectacular ways for letting it be known that they were different from the common horde. Some of “the horde” ARE common, too, especially if they are pressmen!

Humans of the worst type—you know who THEY are! —just LOVE to drag everyone down to the same level; they just cannot bear to that anyone is different from they, so, like maniacs, they cry “destroy! destroy!” And instead of trying to prove a person right—they must always try to prove him wrong. The Press in particular like to start witch-hunting and persecute a person so that sensation may be stirred up. The morons of the Press lack the wits to think that there MIGHT be “something in it after all!”

Edward Davis, "America's Toughest Cop," wrote in True Magazine dated January 1975. "The Media in general is really composed of a bunch of frustrated fiction writers. Putting it another way, Journalism is filled with Picasso types who get out their paint boxes and construct a picture that's supposed to be me, but which nobody recognizes except the guy with the tar brush and feathers."

Mr. Davis, it is very clear, does not like the Press. Nor do I. Both of us have good reason not to. A pressman said to me. "Truth? Truth never sold a paper. Sensation does. We do not bother with truth; we sell sensation."

Ever since the publication of "The Third Eye"—a TRUE book,—strange creatures have crawled out of the woodwork" and with pens dipped in venom have written books and articles attacking me. Self-styled "experts" declared THIS to be false, while others of the genre declared THIS to be true but THAT false. No two "experts" could agree.

Itinerant "investigators" toured around interviewing people who had never met me, fabricating wholly imaginary stories. The investigators never met me either.

Pressmen, desperate for sensation, concocted "interviews" which never took place, Mrs. Rampa, in an entirely fabricated "interview" was quoted—misquoted—as saying the book was fiction. She did not say it. She has never said it.

We both say, "Pal my books are TRUE."

But neither press, radio, or publishers, have EVER permitted me the opportunity of giving my side of the matter. Never! Nor have I been asked to appear on T.V. or radio and tell the Truth! Like many before me I have been persecuted for being "different" from the majority.

So Humanity destroys those who could help Mankind with special knowledge, or special experiences. We, the Unusual, could, if allowed, push back the Frontiers of Knowledge and advance man's understanding of Man. The press report me as small and hairy, big and bald, tall and short, thin and fat. Also—according to "reliable" press reports, I am English, Russian, a German sent to Tibet by Hitler, Indian, etc. "RELIABLE" press reports! ANYTHING—anything at all except the Truth—but that is contained within my books.

So many lies have been told about me. So much distorted imagination has been exercised, so much suffering has been caused, so much misery—But here in this book is Truth. I am telling it As It Was!

RAMPA: FUTURE PAST — FUTURE PERFECT

BOOK ONE

AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING

CHAPTER ONE

The old man leaned back wearily against a supporting pillar. His back was numb with the pain of sitting long hours in one cramped position. His eyes were blurred with the rheum of age. Slowly he rubbed his eyes with the back of his hands and peered around. Papers—papers, nothing but papers littered the table before him. Papers covered with strange symbols and masses of crabbed figures.

Dimly seen people moved before him awaiting his orders. Slowly the old man climbed to his feet, fretfully thrusting aside helping hands. Shaking with the weight of years he moved to a nearby window. Shivering a little by the opening, he tucked his ancient robe tighter around his sparse frame. Bracing his elbows against the stonework he stared around. Cursed with the ability to see afar when his work demanded that he see near, he now could see to the farthest limits of the Plain of Lhasa.

The day was warm for Lhasa. The willow trees were at their best, with leaves showing the youngest green. Small catkins, or pussy-willow, lent a pleasant myriad of yellow streaks to the green and brown background. Four hundred feet below the old man the colors blended most harmoniously with the gleam of the pellucid water showing through the lower branches.

The old Chief Astrologer mused on the land before him, contemplated the mighty Potala in which he lived and which he so rarely left, and then only for the most pressing matters. No, no, he thought, let me not think of THAT yet; let me rest my eyes by enjoying the view.

There was much activity in the Village of Sho which clustered so snugly at the foot of the Potala. Brigands had been caught while robbing traders in the high mountain passes and had been brought to the Hall of Justice in the Village. Justice had already been dispensed to other offenders; men convicted of some serious crime or other walked away from the Hall, their chains clanking in tune with their steps. Now they would have to wander from place to place begging for their food, for, chained, they could not easily work.

The old Astrologer gazed wistfully toward the Great Cathedral of Lhasa. Long had

RAMPA: FUTURE PAST — FUTURE PERFECT

he contemplated a visit to renew boyhood memories; his official duties had for too many years prevented any diversions for pleasure alone. Sighing, he started to turn away from the window, then he stopped and looked hard into the distance. Beckoning to an attendant, he said, "Coming along the Dodpal Linga, just by the Caesar, I seem to recognize that boy, isn't it the Rampa boy?" The attendant nodded "Yes, Reverend Sir that is the Rampa boy and the manservant Tzu, The boy whose future you are preparing in that horoscope." The old Astrologer smiled wryly as he looked down on the figure of the very small boy and the immense almost seven-foot tall manservant from the Province of Kham, He watched as the two ill-matched figures, one on a small pony and the other on a large horse, rode up until an outcrop of rock from the Mountain hid them from view.

Nodding to himself, he turned back to the littered table. "So THIS" he murmured, "will be square with THAT. Hmmn, so for more than sixty years he will have much suffering because of the adverse influence of — " His voice lapsed into a low drone as he rifled through countless papers, making notes here, and scratching-out there.

This old man was the most famous astrologer of Tibet, a man well versed in the mysteries of that venerable art, The astrology of Tibet is far different from that of the West. Here in Lhasa the date of conception was correlated with the date of birth. A progressed horoscope also would be done for the date on which the complete "work" was to be delivered. The Chief Astrologer would predict the Life Path of the famous, and of significant members of those families. The government itself would be advised by astrologers, as would the Dalai Lama. But THIS was not the astrology of the West, which seems to be prostituted to the sensational press.

At long, low tables, priest-astrologers sat cross-legged checking figures and their relationship to each other. Charts were drawn of the heavenly configurations extant at the time of conception, time of birth, time of delivery of the horoscope reading, which was known well in advance, and for every year of "the life of the subject" a full chart and annual delineation was prepared. Then there was the blending of the whole into one very large report.

Tibetan paper is all handmade and forms sheaves quite thick, held in a pile between two sheets of wood. In the West sheets roughly eight inches from top to bottom by about two feet to two feet six broad. Western paper for writing is longer from top to bottom than it is broad; Tibetan paper is the opposite. The pages of books are not bound but are carefully tied with tapes as such books would soon be ruined, with pages lost or torn.

In Tibet paper is sacred and is treated with extreme care; to waste paper is a serious offense and to tear a page was to waste paper—hence the extreme care. A lama would be reading, but he would have a small acolyte to stand by him. The wooden top sheet of the book would be removed with great care and would be placed face down on the left of the Reader. Then, after reading the top sheet, the page would reverently be removed by the acolyte and placed face down on the top cover. After the reading was finished, the sheets would be carefully leveled, and the book would be tied together with tapes.

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So was the horoscope prepared. Sheet after sheet was written on or drawn upon. The sheet was put aside to dry, for it was an offense to waste paper by smudging.

Then, at last, after perhaps six months, for time did not matter, the horoscope was ready. Slowly the acolyte, in this case a young monk with already several years of experience, reverently lifted the sheet and placed it face down upon its companion on the leaf. The old Astrologer lifted the new sheet thus exposed.

“Tch, tch,” he grumbled, “this ink is going a bad color before it is even exposed to the light. We must have this page written”. With that he picked up one of his “scribble sticks” and made a hasty notation. These scribble sticks were an invention dating back many thousands of years, but they were made in precisely the same manner as they had been made two or three thousand years before. There was, in fact, a legend to the effect that Tibet had once been by the side of a shining sea and support was lent to the legend by the frequent finding of seashells, fossilized fish, and many other items which could have come only from a warmer country then beside the sea. There were buried artifacts of a long-dead race, tools, carvings jewelry. All these, together with gold, could be found in great profusion by the side of the rivers that ran through the country.

But now the scribble sticks were made in exactly the same way as they had been made previously. A large mass of clay was obtained and then monks sallied forth and picked from willow trees suitable saplings, thin pieces of twig about half as thick as one's little finger and perhaps a foot long. These were very carefully gathered and then were taken back to a special department of the Potala. Here all the twigs would be carefully examined and graded, the straight flawless ones would have particular care devoted to them, they would be peeled and then wrapped in clay, much caution being exercised to ensure that the twigs were not bent.

Those twigs which had a slight bend or twist were also wrapped in clay because they would be suitable for junior monks and acolytes to use in their own writings. The bundles of clay, each with a seal-impression showing which was super class (for the highest lamas and the Inmost One himself), and then first class for high class lamas, and second class for ordinary use, would have a very small hole made through the clay so that steam generated during a heating process could escape and thus obviate the bursting of the clay wrapping.

Now the clay would be laid on racks in a large chamber. For a month or so they would just lie there with the moisture evaporating in the low-humidity atmosphere. Sometime between four to six months later the clay bundles would be removed and transferred to a fire—the fire would also be used for cooking purposes, heating water, and things like that—and carefully placed so that they were right in the reddest part of the fire. For a day the temperature would be maintained and then that fire would be permitted to die out. When it was cold the clay bundles would be broken open, the waste clay thrown away, and the carbonized willow sticks (charcoal) would now be ready for the highest use which is the dissemination of true knowledge.

The willow sticks which had been determined as unsuitable for conversion into charcoal sticks would have been used to help the fires drying out the clay of the better

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sticks. The fires were of well-dried yak dung and any odd wood which happened to be around. But again, wood was never used for burning if it could be of use for some other “more noble” purpose because wood was in very short supply in Tibet.

Scribble sticks, then, were that commodity which in the Western world are known as charcoal sticks and which are used by artists in their black and white drawings. But ink also was required in Tibet, and for that another sort of wood was used, again wrapped in clay. This was heated much longer and subjected to a much higher temperature.

Then, after several days when the fires were extinguished and the clay balls raked from the now cold firebed and broken open, a very black residue would be found inside; almost pure carbon.

The carbon would be taken and very, very carefully examined for anything which was not black carbon. Then it would be put in a piece of fairly coarse mesh cloth which would be tightened and tightened over a piece of stone which had a depression in it, which had, in effect, a trough in it. The trough would be possibly eighteen inches by twelve inches and perhaps two inches deep. Monks of the domestic class would pummel the cloth in the bottom of the trough so that gradually a very fine carbon dust was formed. Eventually that would be mixed with a hot gum from certain trees which grew in the area, it would be stirred and stirred and stirred until the result was a black gooey mass. Then it would be allowed to dry in cakes afterwards when one wanted ink one just rubbed one of these cakes in a special stone container and a little water would be added to it. The result would be an ink which was of a rusty-brown color.

Official documents and the highly important astrological charts were never prepared from ink of this common base, instead there was a piece of very highly polished marble which was suspended at an angle of about forty-five degrees, and below it there would be perhaps a dozen butter-lamps sputtering away, the wicks would be made too long—too high—so that the lamps gave off a thick black smoke. The smoke would hit the polished marble and would immediately condense into a black mass.

Eventually when a suitable thickness had built up a young monk would tip the plate of marble and scoop off all the accumulation of “lamp black” before restoring the plate to its forty-five degree angle so that more carbon could be collected.

From trees a resinous gum would be collected and would be put in a container which would be very thoroughly heated so that the gum acquired the consistency of water and became much clarified. From the top of the gum, merrily boiling and seething away, a thick residue of scum would be scraped leaving an absolutely clear, slightly yellow, liquid. Into that would be stirred a whole mass of “lamp black” until the result was a fairly stiff paste. Then the stuff would be ladled out and spread on stone to cool and solidify. For the highest lamas and officials the lumps would be cut into rectangles and made into a fairly presentable mass, but the lower echelon of monks were glad to get any shape of ink slab. This was used as was the first type, that is, a special piece of stone with a recess, or small trough, was used, and into it was scraped some of the small block of ink. Then it was mixed with water until a suitable consistency was obtained.

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There were, of course, no steel pens in Tibet, no fountain pens, no ball pens, instead willow twigs were used which had been carefully skinned and made smooth and the ends slightly fluffed so that, in effect, they were like brushes with very, very short bristles. The sticks were then carefully dried—very carefully indeed to avoid cracking or warping—and then when they were dry enough to prevent splitting they were put on hot stone which had the effect of fire—hardening them so that they could be handled with impunity and so that they would last quite a long time.

Tibetan writing, then, is more Tibetan brushing because the characters, the ideographs, are written with a brush-form in somewhat the same way as Chinese or Japanese people write.

But the old Astrologer was muttering away about the poor quality of ink on a page. He continued reading, and then found that he was reading about the death of the subject of the horoscope. Tibetan astrology covers all aspects, life—living—death. Carefully he went through his predictions, checking and rechecking, because this was a prediction for the member of a very important family, a prediction for a person who was important not merely because of his family connections but important in his own right because of the task allotted to him.

The old man sat back, his bones creaking with weariness. With a shudder of apprehension he recalled that his own death was precariously near. This was his last great task, the preparation of a horoscope is such detail as he had never done before.

The conclusion of this task and the successful declaiming of his reading would result in the loosening of the bonds of the flesh, and the early termination of his own life. He wasn't afraid of death; death was merely a period of transition as he knew; but transition or no transition it was still a period of change, change which the old man loathed and feared. He would have to leave his beloved Potala, he would have to vacate his coveted position of Chief Astrologer of Tibet, he would have to leave all the things that he knew, all the things which were dear to him, he would have to leave and, like a new boy at a lamasery, he would have to start again. When? He knew that! Where? He knew that too! But it was hard leaving old friends, it was hard making a change life, because there is no death, that which we call death is merely transition from life to life.

He thought of the processes. He saw himself as he had seen others so often—dead, the immobile body no longer able to move, no longer a sentient creature, but just a mass of dead flesh supported by a mass of dead bones.

In his imagination he saw himself thus, being stripped of his robes and bundled up with his head touching his knees and his legs bent behind. In his mind's eye he saw himself being bundled on the back of a pony, wrapped in cloth, and taken away beyond the outskirts of the City of Lhasa where he would be given into the care of the Disposers of the Dead.

They would take his body and they would place it on a big flat rock, specially prepared for that purpose. He would be split open and all his organs would be taken out. The Chief of the Disposers would call aloud into the air and down would come swooping

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a whole flock of vultures, well accustomed to such things.

The Chief Disposer would take the heart and throw it toward the chief vulture who would gulp it down without much ado, then the kidneys, the lungs, and other organs would be cut up and thrown to the other vultures.

With bloodstained hands the Disposers would rip off the flesh from the white bones, would cut the flesh into strips and throw them too to the vultures who were clustered around like a solemn congregation of old men at a party.

With all the flesh stripped off and all the organs disposed of, the bones would be broken into small lengths and then would be pushed into holes in the rock. Then rods of rock would pound the bones until they became just a powder. The powder would be mixed with the blood from the body and with other body secretions and left on the rocks for the birds to eat. Soon, in a matter of a few hours, there would be no trace of that which had once been a man. No trace of the vultures either; they would have gone away—somewhere—until called for their grisly service on the next occasion.

The old man thought of all this, thought of the things he had seen in India where poor people were disposed of by throwing the weighted bodies into the rivers or by burying them in the earth, but the richer people who could afford wood would have their bodies burned until only the flaky ash remained and then this would be thrown into some sacred river so that the ash, and perhaps the spirit of the person, would be called back to the bosom of “Mother Earth.”

He shook himself roughly and muttered, “This is no time to think of my transition, let me finish my task while I prepare the notes on the transition of this small boy.”

But it was not to be, there came an interruption. The old Astrologer was murmuring instructions for the whole page to be rewritten in better ink when there came the sound of hasty footfalls, and the slamming of a door. The old man looked up fretfully, he wasn't used to having interruptions of this kind, he wasn't used to having noise in the Astrological Department. This was an area of calm, of quietude, of contemplation where the loudest sound was the scraping of a fire-hardened twig across the rough surface of handmade paper. There came the sound of raised voices. “I MUST see him, I MUST see him this instant, the Inmost One demands.”

Then there came the slap slap of feet upon the ground, and the rustle of stiff cloth. A lama of the Dalai Lama's household appeared clutching in his right hand a stick in a cleft of which, at the distal end, a piece of paper was seen to bear the writing of the Inmost One himself. The lama came forward, made a customary half bow to the old Astrologer, and inclined the stick in his direction so that he could remove the written mis-sive. He did so, and frowned in dismay.

“But, but—” he muttered, “how can I go now? I am in the midst of these calculations, I am in the midst of these computations. If I have to stop at this instant—” But then he realized that there was nothing for it but to go “on the instant”. With a sigh of resignation he changed his old work robe for a tidier one, picked up some charts and a few scribble sticks, and turned to a monk beside him saying, “Here, boy, carry these and

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accompany me.” Turning, he walked slowly out of the room in the wake of the golden robed lama.

The golden robed lama moderated his step so that the aged one following him should not be unduly distressed. For long they traversed endless corridors, monks and lamas scurrying about their business stood respectfully aside with heads bowed as the Chief Astrologer went by them.

After a considerable walk, and mounting from floor to floor, the golden robed lama and the Chief Astrologer reached the topmost floor wherein were the apartments of the Dalai Lama himself, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, the Inmost one, the one who was to do more for Tibet than any other Dalai Lama.

The two men turned a corner and encountered three young monks behaving in an apparently riotous manner; they were skating about with their feet wrapped in cloth. Respectfully they ceased their gambols and stood aside as the two men passed. These young men had a full-time job; there were many floors to be kept spotlessly polished, and the three young monks spent the whole of their working hours with heavy cloths around their feet, they walked and ran and slid across the vast areas of flooring, and as a result of their efforts the floor had a wondrous gleam together with the patina of antiquity. But—the floor was slippery. Considerately the golden robed lama stepped back and took the arm of the old Astrologer, knowing full well that a broken leg or a broken arm at his age would be virtual sentence of death.

Soon they came to a large sunny room in which the Great Thirteenth himself was sitting in the lotus position gazing out through a window at the panorama of Himalayan mountain ranges stretching before him and, in fact, all around the Valley of Lhasa.

The old Astrologer made his prostrations to the God-King of Tibet. The Dalai Lama motioned for the attendants to leave, and soon he and the Chief Astrologer were alone sitting face to face on the seat-cushions used in Tibet in place of chairs.

These were old acquaintances, well versed to the ways each of the other. The Chief Astrologer knew all the affairs of State, knew all the predictions about Tibet for he, indeed, had made most of them. Now the Great Thirteenth was looking most serious because these were momentous days, days of stress, days of worry. The East India Company, a British Company, was trying to get gold and other items out of the country, and various agents and leaders of British military might were toying with the idea of invading Tibet and taking over that country but the threat of Russia in the near background prevented that drastic step being taken. It will suffice to say, though, that the British caused much turmoil and much trouble for Tibet at that stage, just as in much later years the Chinese Communists would do. So far as the Tibetans were concerned there was little to choose between the Chinese and the British, the Tibetans merely wanted to be left alone.

Unfortunately there was another more serious problem in that in Tibet at that time there were two sets of priests, one was known as the Yellow Caps and the other was known as the Red Caps. Sometimes there were violent disputes between them, and the two leaders, the Dalai Lama who was the head of the Yellow Caps, and the Panchen Lama

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who was the head of the Red Caps, had no love whatever for each other.

Really there was little sympathy between the two sects. The Dalai Lama's supporters at the time had the upper hand, but it had not always been so, at other times the Panchen Lama—who was soon to be forced to leave Tibet—had been in the forefront and then the country had been plunged into chaos until the Dalai Lama had been able to reinforce his claims with the aid of the Tartars and because on religious grounds the Yellow Caps had what one might term “superior sanctity.”

The Inmost One—the Dalai Lama who was given that title, and was well known as The Great Thirteenth—made many questions concerning the probable future of Tibet. The old Astrologer fumbled around in the portfolio he had with him and produced papers and charts, and together the two men pored over them.

“In less than sixty years,” said the Astrologer, “Tibet as a free entity will be no more. The hereditary enemy, the Chinese, with a new form of political government will invade the country and will virtually do away with the Order of Priests in Tibet.”

At the passing of the Great Thirteenth, the Dalai Lama was told, another would be chosen as a palliative to Chinese aggression. A child would be picked as being the Reincarnation of the Great Thirteenth, and irrespective of the accuracy of the choice it would first and foremost be a political choice because what would be known as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama would come from Chinese held territory.

The Inmost One was most gloomy about the whole affair, and tried to work out plans of how to save his beloved country, but, as the Chief Astrologer so accurately pointed out, much could be done to circumvent the bad horoscope of an individual but there was no known way of substantially altering the horoscope and the destiny of a whole country. A country was composed of too many different units, too many individuals who could not be moulded, nor commanded, nor persuaded to think along the same lines at the same time for the same purpose. So the fate of Tibet was known. The fate of the Wise Sayings, the Holy Books and the Holy Knowledge was not yet known, but it was thought that by suitable means a young man could be trained, given special knowledge, given special abilities, and then sent forth into the world beyond the confines of Tibet so that he could write of his knowledge and of the knowledge of Tibet. The two men continued talking, and then at last the Dalai Lama said, “And this boy, the Rampa boy, have you yet prepared the horoscope for him? I shall want you to read it at a special party at the Rampa household in two weeks from this day.” The Chief Astrologer shuddered. Two weeks? He would not have been ready in two months or two years if he had not been given a firm date. So, in a quavering voice, he replied, “Yes, Your Holiness, all will be ready by two weeks from this day. But this boy is going to have most unfortunate conditions during his life, suffering and torture, disowning by his own countrymen, illness—every obstacle that one can imagine is being placed in his way by evil forces and by one particular force which I, as yet, do not completely understand but which appears to be connected in some ways with the newspaper workers.

The Dalai Lama sighed noisily, and said, “Well, let us put that aside for the time being because what is inevitable cannot be altered. You will have to go through your

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charts again during the next two weeks to make absolutely sure of that which you are going to declaim. For the moment, let us have a game of chess, I am tired of the affairs of State.”

A silver bell was tinkled, and a golden robed lama came into the room and received the order to bring the chess set and the chess board so that the two men could play. Chess was very popular with the higher intellects of Lhasa, but it is a different sort of chess from that which is played in the West. In the West when a game is started the first pawn of each party moves two steps instead of the normal one as in Tibet, and in Tibet there is no such thing as castling in which when a pawn reached the back line it could become a castle, nor was the stalemate status used, instead it was considered that a state of balance or stasis had been reached when the king was left alone without a pawn or without any other piece on the board.

The two men sat and played with endless patience, each in the warm glow of love and respect which had grown between these two, and above them on the flat roof just above the Dalai Lama's quarters the prayer flags flapped in the high mountain breeze. Further down the corridor the prayer wheels clattered, churning out their endless imaginary prayers. On the flat roofs gleams blindingly golden shot from the tombs of the previous Incarnations of the Dali Lama, for in Tibetan belief each Dalai Lama as he died merely went into transition and then returned to Earth in the body of some small boy. In Tibet transmigration was such an accepted fact of religion that it was not even worthy of comment. So up on the flat roof twelve bodies lay in twelve golden tombs, each tomb having an intricately designed roof with many spirals, whorls, and convolutions designed to delude and throw off evil spirits.”

From the golden tombs one could see across to the gleaming building of the College of Medical Science Chakpori on Iron Mountain, the home of medicine for Tibet. Beyond there was the City of Lhasa, now on this day shining bright under the high noon sun. The sky was a deep purple, and the mountains ringing the Valley of Lhasa had spumes of pure white snow blowing from their peaks.

As the hours rolled on, marked by the growing shadows from the Western mountain range, the two men in the State apartments below sighed and reluctantly pushed aside their chess pieces for now was the time of worship, the time when the Dalai Lama had to attend to his devotions, the time when the Chief Astrologer had to return to his computations if he were to meet the dead line imposed by the Dalai Lama of two weeks.

Again the silver bell was tinkled, again a golden robed lama appeared, and with a few muttered words was directed to assist the Chief Astrologer to return to his own quarters three floors below. The Chief Astrologer rose creakily to his aged feet, made his ritual prostrations, and left the presence of his Spiritual Chief.

CHAPTER TWO

“Oo-ee! Oo-ee! Ay-yah! Ay-yah!” said the voice in the dusk of that pleasant day. “Did you hear about that Lady Rampa? She's at it again!” There was the shuffling of feet

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on the road, the sound of little pebbles being rolled underfoot, and then a sigh. "Lady Rampa? What has she done now?"

The first voice answered with ill-disguised glee. It seems that for a certain type of woman, no matter her class, no matter her nationality, if she be a bearer of tidings—preferably bad—her day is made.

"My stepson's aunt has heard a strange tale. As you know, she is going to get married to that customs man who works down at the Western Gate. Her boy friend has been telling her that for months past Lady Rampa has been ordering all manner of things from India, and now the traders in their caravans are beginning to deliver the goods. Have you heard anything about it?"

"Well, I did hear that there was a special going to be held in their gardens in the near future, but you must remember that the Great Lord Rampa was our Regent when the Inmost One went to India during the invasion of the British that did so much harm. I suppose its only natural that one of the leading ladies of our country should want that, do you?"

The informant exhaled gustily and then drew a deep to order something. I don't see what she's doing wrong in breath and declaimed, "Ahh! But you don't know the whole of it, you don't even know the half of it! I've heard tell from one of my friends who serves one of the waiting-monks down at the Kesar—he comes from the Potala, you know—that a very very thorough horoscope and life reading is being prepared for that little fellow, you know the little runt who's always getting into trouble and who seems to be such a sore trial to his father. I wondered if you had heard anything about that?"

The second lady thought a moment and then she replied, "Yes, but you must remember that Paljor died recently—I saw his body being carried out with my very own eyes. The Body Breakers carried him out very reverently from the house, and the two priests accompanied him as far as the gate, but with my very own two eyes I saw that as soon as the two priests turned back the poor little body was unceremoniously dumped, belly down, on the back of a pony and was taken off to the Ragyab so that the Disposers of the Dead could break him up and feed him to the vultures. He had to be disposed of."

"No, no, no!" expostulated the exasperated informer, you miss the whole point. You cannot have much experience of these social matters; with the death of the older boy that little fellow, Lobsang, is now the heir to the Lhalu family estates and fortunes, they are millionaires you know. They've got money here, they've got money in India, and they've got money in China. I think they must be our wealthiest family. And this little fellow, why should he inherit it all? Why should he have such a life of luxury before him when we have to work—my husband said to me that, never mind, one of these days there will be a change, we shall take the residences of the upper parties and we shall live in luxury and they will work for us. We shall see what we shall see if we only live long enough, praise be the day.

There had been the sound of slow footsteps coming through the gloaming, Now a faint blur of face could be discerned and the black, black tresses of a Tibetan woman.

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“I could not help hearing what was said,” the newcomer announced, “but we have to remember that this little lad Lobsang Rampa, he's going to have a hard life ahead of him because all those with money have a very, very hard life indeed”.

“Oh well then,” replied the informer, “all of us should have a very very easy time indeed. We've no money at all, have we?” With that she burst into cackles of witch-like laughter.

The newcomer went on, “Well, I've heard it said that a big affair is being planned so that the Great Lord Rampa can proclaim his son, Lobsang, to be his heir. I've heard too, that the boy is going to be sent off to India to be trained, and the trouble then will be to keep him out of the hands of the British because the British are trying to get control of our country, you know, and look at the damage they've done. But, no, that boy, rich or poor, he's got a hard life ahead of him, you mark my words—you mark my words.” The voices drifted off as the three women went carefully along the Lingkor Road, passing along by the Snake Temple, passing along by the Kaling Chu to cross the Chara Sanpa Bridge.

Just a few yards away—or perhaps a few yards more than that!- the subject of their discussion, a small boy not yet seven years of age, tossed restlessly on the hard floor of his room. He was asleep more or less, having fitful dreams, having also frightful nightmares; he was thinking of kites and how awful it would be if it was ever found out that he was the one who was flying the kite that swooped down on the travellers and scared their ponies so much that one of the riders fell off and rolled straight into the river, such an important man that rider was, too, as assistant to an Abbot of one of the Lamaseries. The poor boy turned and writhed in his sleep as in his dream-state he thought of all the dire punishments that would be inflicted upon his protesting body should he ever be revealed as the culprit.

Life was quite hard for young boys of the leading families in Lhasa. Those boys were supposed to set an example to others, they were supposed to endure hardship to toughen them for the battles of life, they were supposed to have greater hardship than those of lowly birth, to act as an example, to show that even the sons of the wealthy, even the sons of those who ruled the country, could endure pain, suffering, and privation. And the discipline for a boy not yet even seven years of age was something which Western boys of any age would never endure.

From beyond the Bridge there came the mumble, mumble of female voices as the three women stopped for a last chat before each departed to her own home. There came on errant breezes the words “Rampa,” “Yasodhara,” and then a mumble of voices until at last the gravel beneath their feet stirred restlessly as the women bade each other good night and went each her own respective way.

In the great Lhalu residence, whose massive front gate had so well withstood the assaults of the British infantry that they could gain access only by breaching the stone wall, the family were asleep, all except the “Guardians of the Night”, those who stood watch and called out the night hours and the state of the weather so that any who by chance should be awake should know of the progress of the night.

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Adjacent to the chapel of Lhalu residence were the Stewards' quarters. The highest class Tibetan officials maintained their own chapels in their residence staffed by one or two priests; the Rampa residence was of such importance that two priests were considered absolutely necessary. Every three years the priests—monks from the Potala—would be replaced by others so that those in household service should not become too effete through their domestic domicile. One of the lamas, for these monks were indeed lamas, had but recently joined the household. The other was soon to leave to return to the stern discipline of the lamasery, and the latter was tossing restlessly, wondering how he could prolong his stay for it was indeed the chance of a lifetime to see the heir of a great family have his horoscope proclaimed to the public so that all might know in advance what manner of man he would grow up to be.

This was a young lama, one who had come to the Lhalu estate with high recommendations from his Abbot, but he had proved to be a sorry disappointment. His amusements were not wholly ecclesiastical, not wholly priestly, for he was one of those who had that which is termed "the wandering eye," and his glances strayed ever and again to the young and comely members of the domestic staff. The Steward who lived to the left of the chapel had noticed this and had registered a complaint, and so the poor young lama was facing dismissal in some disgrace. His successor had not yet been appointed and the young man was wondering how he could delay matters so that he could have the fame of being one of the participants in the celebrations and religious services to follow.

The poor wretched Steward, also, was having much distress. Lady Rampa was indeed a difficult woman, very harsh in her judgment at times, apt to condemn without giving a man a chance to explain that some of these difficulties were not of his making. Now he had goods on order for some three months, and—well, everyone knew how slow the Indian traders were—but Lady Rampa was making a terrible commotion and saying that the Steward was endangering the success of the whole enterprise by his inefficiency in getting supplies. "What can I do?" he muttered to himself as he tossed and turned on his blanket on the floor. "How can I persuade the dealers to bring the goods on time?" So muttering he rolled over on to his back, his mouth fell open, and he emitted such horrendous snores that one of the night watchmen looked in to see if he was dying!

Lady Rampa was turning restlessly too. She was very socially-conscious. She was wondering if the Steward was absolutely sure of the order of precedence, wondering if all the messages had been written, all the invitations on the special handmade paper tied up with ribbon and then placed in a cleft stick which fast riders would carry mounted on their ponies. It had to be done just right, she thought, one could not have an inferior receiving an invitation before his superior had received one. These matters leak out, there are ever people anxious to pull down a hard working hostess who is trying to do the best for her family prestige. Lady Rampa twisted and turned, wondering about the food supplies, wondering if by any chance things would not arrive on time.

Nearby in a little room, sister Yasodhara was fretting a bit. Her mother had already decreed what she would wear at the party and it wasn't at all what Yasodhara wanted to wear, she had different ideas altogether. After all, as she said to herself, this is the one time in the year to really look over the boys and see which one of them would be suitable

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as a husband in later years, and to look over the boys meant that she too must have something to attract them—clothing, it must be suitable clothing, her hair must be well brushed with yak butter, her clothes must be dusted with the finest of jasmine. She had to do everything possible to attract what she hoped would be a good husband for the future, but her mother—mothers never understood, they were of a bygone age, they didn't understand at all how young girls had to go along nowadays, they had forgotten such things. Yasodhara lay back and thought and thought, and planned could she add a ribbon here or a flower there, how could she improve her appearance?

As the night grew older and older and the new dawn, the dawn of a new day, was ready to be born the booming of conches and the blare of trumpets awakened the fitfully sleeping household. The youngest Rampa opened a sleep-bleared eye, grunted, and turned over again to be fast asleep before the turning motion was completed.

Down near the Steward's office the night watchmen were going off duty while a fresh shift were taking their places. The most menial of the servants awakened with a start at the blaring noises from the surrounding temples and jumped to their feet, struggling into half-frozen clothes. Theirs was the task of seeing that the smoldering fires were raked and stirred into fresh life, theirs was the task of polishing the rooms, cleaning the place, before the family got down to see it in its overnight state of untidiness.

In the stables where the many horses were kept, and in the farm buildings at the back where the yaks were housed servants rummaged around, scooping up the manure deposited there by the animals overnight. Dried and mixed with a few scraps of wood this would provide the staple fuel of Tibet.

The cooks reluctantly turned out to face another day, they were tired, they had been busy for several weeks past preparing food in fantastic quantities and having the additional task of trying to protect the food from the depredations of light-fingered small boys and light-fingered small girls, too. They were tired, they were sick of the whole affair, they were saying to each other, "Why doesn't this thing get started and finished so that we can have some peace again. The Mistress has gone off her head even worse with all the preparations."

The Mistress—the Lady Rampa—had indeed been busy. For days she had been in her husband's office plaguing his secretaries to provide lists of all the most important people living in Lhasa, and some chosen few from other nearby centres. As well she made the hard demand that suitable foreigners who could be of beneficent influence later be invited, but here again there was the question protocol and the order of seniority, who came before whom, who would be insulted in THIS position when they felt that they should be in THAT position. It was all a great task, a great trial a great tribulation, and the servants were tired of getting a list one day and finding that the next day a fresh list would supersede the one issued the day before.

For days now the whole place had been scoured, fine gritty sand had been used to shine up stonework mellowed by age, strong men servants with cloth around their feet and heavy blocks of stone wrapped in cloth trudged around the house pushing their heavy stone burden across floors that were already mirror-bright.

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In the gardens weary gardeners on hands and knees went over the ground removing weeds, even removing little stones which were of the wrong color. The mistress of the house was a hard task mistress indeed, this was the high point of her life, the son and heir of the Lhalu establishment, one who could be a prince or—what?—was to be launched and only the astrologers would tell what was to be his life, but the astrologers would give no hint, would give no forewarning of what their Reading would reveal.

The lady of the house, the wife of one of the most powerful men in lay-life of Tibet, hoped and hoped that her son would leave the country and be educated elsewhere, she hoped that she would be able to persuade her husband that she should make frequent visits to her son studying in a different country. She hoped to visit different countries, for long she had surreptitiously glanced at some of the magazines brought to Lhasa by itinerant traders. She had her plans, she had her dreams and her ambitions, but everything depended on the verdict of the Chief Astrologer and everyone knew how uncaring of one's social position astrologers could be.

Now the time was fast approaching when this great Party was to be held. Traders were entering by the Western Gate and making fast footsteps toward the Lhalu residence, the wiser ones—or those with greater business acumen—knew that the Lady Rampa would soon fall prey to their wiles if they could produce something new, something that hadn't been seen in Lhasa before, something which would make her neighbors and social competitors exclaim in feigned awe which really concealed frustration and jealousy that they had not had it first.

So many a trader made his slow way from the Western Gate along the Lingkor Road, around the back of the Potala, past the Snake Temple to the Lhalu residence, there to attempt to beguile the lady of the house with strange exotic items with which she could entertain and amaze her guests. Some took their yak trains and brought their whole stock-in-trade to the residence so that the lady in person could see precisely what they had to sell, and of course for such an important occasion the prices must be inflated because no lady who was indeed a lady would even dare to bargain or quibble at the prices asked for fear that the traders would mention to the neighbors that Lady Rampa could not pay the proper price but wanted a discount, or concessions, or samples.

Day after day the yak trains went by, day after day the men from the stables scooped up the bounty from the yaks and added it to the pile of fuel which was so rapidly growing, and indeed much extra fuel would be needed for the cooking, for the heating, and for the bonfires, because who could possibly have a good party without a good bonfire?

The gardeners, having satisfactorily cleared the ground of all weeds, turned their attention to the trees, making sure that there were no broken branches, making sure that there were no dead branches which could appear unsightly and lead to an accusation of an ill-kept garden. Even more disastrous would be if some small branch fell upon some noble lady and disarranged her hairstyle which over hours would have been piled on a special lacquered wooden framework. So the gardeners were tired of parties, tired of work, and yet they dare not slack for the Lady Rampa seemed to have eyes everywhere, no sooner would a man sit down for a moment to rest an aching back than she would

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appear screaming with rage that he was delaying things.

At last the order of precedence was decided upon and approved by the Great Lord Rampa himself who personally affixed his seal to each of the invitations as they were carefully prepared by monk-scribes. The paper was specially made for the occasion, it was thick paper with a rough edge, almost a deckle-edge, in fact. Each sheet was roughly twelve inches wide by two feet long. These invitations did not follow the normal size or pattern as used in lamaseries; in lamaseries the paper is wider than it is long, but when there were very important invitations they were written on a narrower paper which was about twice as long as it was wide because after the invitation was accepted the paper would be fastened to two bamboo rods richly decorated at the ends, and then the invitation would be carefully suspended from a string and used as a decoration to show how important the recipient was.

The Lord Rampa was one of the Upper Ten families in Lhasa. The Lord Rampa himself was actually one of the Upper Five, but Lady Rampa was one of the Upper Ten, otherwise they could not have married. In view of the fact that each of them had such high social status two seals had to be affixed to the invitation, one for His Lordship and one for Her Ladyship, and then because they were married and had such an extensive estate they had a third seal which was known as the Estate Seal, and that too had to go upon the document. Each seal was of a different color, and the Lady Rampa and the Steward were in a state bordering on frenzy lest the messengers were clumsy and did something which would crack the fragile, brittle seals.

Special message-sticks were prepared. These had to be of exactly the same length and very nearly the same thickness, each had a special slot at one end which would receive and hold the message. Then just below that slot there was a piece fixed on which bore the family coat of arms. Below the coat of arms there were narrow strands of a very tough paper on which were printed prayers, hoping for protection for the messenger and for a safe delivery of the messages, and hoping that the recipient would be able to accept the invitation.

For some time the messengers were carefully drilled in the most imposing manner to ride and deliver the messages. They sat upon their horses waving their message sticks in the air as if they were spears, then on the signal they would charge forward and one by one would approach the Captain of the Guard who was drilling them.

He, pretending to be the householder or the householder's steward, would graciously accept the message from the message stick which was extended and inclined toward him. He would with great respect take the message and bow toward the messenger who was, after all, the representative of "the family." The messenger would bow back, would wheel his horse, and would gallop off from whence he came.

When all the messages, or invitations, were prepared they were placed in order of precedence, and the most imposing messenger took the most important message, and so on, and then off they galloped to deliver the invitations.

Other messengers would come forward, each take a message, and lodge it in the

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cleft of the stick and gallop off. Soon they would return and the whole procedure would be gone through again until, at long last, all the invitations had gone out, and now was the trying time when the Steward and the others had to sit back and wait and wait, and wonder how many would accept the invitations. Had they too much food? Had they not enough? It was most wearing to the nerves.

Some of the guests would be content to stay in the gardens, particularly if they were not of sufficient social status to be accepted into the house itself, but others—well, they were more important and they would have to enter the house, and the representatives of the clergy would also want to see the chapel. So all the lacquer was stripped from the altars and from the altar rails, and men worked with handfuls of cloth which were dipped in moist sand and scraped, and scraped, and scraped until the wood beneath the lacquer was bright and as new. Then a special priming coat was put on, and when that was dry lacquer, many layers of it, was most carefully painted on to the altars and the railings so that in the end the surface shone like the surface of still water on a sunny day.

The poor wretched servants were each called before the lady of the house and the Steward, and they were carefully inspected to see that their clothing was suitable and to see that everything was clean. If their clothing did not pass muster then it had to be carefully washed, for which purpose great cauldrons of hot water were prepared. At last, when the tension was reaching its height, all the invitations were answered, all the servants had been inspected, and all their special clothing had been put aside, not to be worn until The Day. So a tired household sat back in the late evening to await the dawn of a new day when Fate would be revealed.

Slowly the sun sank behind the Western mountains sending up a myriad of scintillating points of light from the ever-present spume blowing from the highest peaks; the snow glowed blood-red, and then darkened to blue, and on to purple. At last there was only the faint loom of the darkness of the sky and the glittering pinpoints of light which were the stars.

At the Lhalu residence mysterious points of light appeared amid the well-kept trees. A chance traveller along the Lingkor Road slowed his step, hesitated, made as if to go on again, and then turned and walked back so that he could see what was afoot, or, more accurately, what was a-tree!

Excited voices came from the gardens, and the wayfarer just could not resist the temptation to pursue the matter further and to find out what it was that was causing such raised voices and what was, apparently, an altercation. As quietly as he could he shinned up the rough stone wall and rested his chest on the top with his arms supporting him, then he could see a novel sight indeed. There was the lady of the house, Lady Rampa, plump, short, almost square, in fact. At either side of her she had two tall servants, each carrying a lighted butter lamp and trying to shield the wavering flame so that it should not be extinguished and arouse Her Ladyship's ire.

Disgruntled gardeners moved disconsolately amid the trees fixing little butter lamps to certain of the lower branches, and then with flint and steel sparks ignited the tinder. Vigorous blowing produced a flame, and from the flame a piece of well-soaked-

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in-butter stick was used to transfer the flame to the butter lamps. The lady was not at all sure where she wanted the lamps, there was endless fumbling about in the darkness with the little flickering lights merely intensifying the purple night. At last there was a commotion and a very large figure came prancing out, shouting with rage: "You're ruining my trees, my trees my trees—you re ruining my trees. I will not have this nonsense. Extinguish those lamps immediately The Lord Rampa was mighty proud of his wonderful trees, trees and gardens which were famed throughout Lhasa.

He was indeed in a frenzy of excitement in case damage should have been caused to some of the newly budding flowers on the trees.

His wife, Her Ladyship, turned to him with lofty mien and said, "You are indeed making a spectacle of yourself, my lord, in front of the servants. Do you not think I am capable of managing this affair? It is my home as well as yours. Do not disturb me." The poor Lord snorted like a bull, one could almost imagine fire coming from his nostrils. He turned angrily on his foot, and hurried away back to the house, there was the sound of a door slamming, a sound so intense and heavy that any less substantial door would surely have been shattered with the shock.

"The incense brazier, Timon, the incense brazier. Are you altogether stupid man? Put it over there, never mind about lighting it now—put it over there." Poor Timon, one of the housemen, struggled along with a heavy brazier, but it was more than one brazier, there were several. The night grew darker and darker, and still the lady of the house wasn't satisfied. But at last the wind blew chill and the Moon appeared and cast a frosty light over the proceedings. The man peering over the wall chuckled to himself and dropped down to the road to continue his journey muttering to himself, "Well! well! If that is the price of being a noble, then glad I am indeed to be merely a humble trader." His footsteps died away in the darkness, and in the garden the butter lamps were extinguished one by one. The staff and the lady of the house departed. In the garden a night bird sniffed the strange unusual smell which came from one of the butter lamps, the wick of which was still smoldering, and flew off with a startled cry of protest.

In the house there was sudden commotion; the boy had disappeared, the heir to the estates, the young princeling—where was he now? He was not in his bed. There was panic. The mother thought he must have run away, being frightened by the severity of his father. The father thought he must have run away, being frightened by the anger of mother, for that day nothing that the poor boy did was right. He had been in trouble the day long, first for getting then for tearing his clothes, then for not being where should have been at a certain time, then for not being present punctually for meals; everything was wrong for him.

Servants were roused, the grounds were searched, butter lamps flared, and flint and tinder smoked. A procession of servants went around the gardens calling for the young Master, but without avail, he wasn't to be found. Sister Yasodhara was awakened to ask her if she could account for the movements of her brother, but—no—she wiped her bleary eyes with the back of her hand, lay down again and was asleep while she was still sitting.

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Servants hurried down the road in the darkness to see if the boy had gone away. Other servants searched the house from top to bottom, and eventually in a storeroom Lobsang was found, asleep on a bag of grain with a cat at each side of him, and all three were snoring mightily. But not for long! The father rushed forward with a roar of rage which almost seemed to shatter the walls, certainly it made the dust from the grain bags jump and dance in the air. The lamps carried by servants flickered, and one or two went out. The poor boy was grasped tightly by the neck while one mighty hand lifted him up high. The mother rushed forward expostulating, "Stop!, Stop! Be very sure you don't mark him because tomorrow he will be the cynosure of all the eyes of Lhasa. Just send him to bed." So the poor boy was given a hearty thump and pushed forward so violently that he fell on his face. One of the men servants picked him up and carried him away. Of the cats there was no sign.

But in the great Potala, at the level assigned to the Astrologers, the activity still continued. The Chief Astrologer was carefully checking his figures, carefully checking his charts, rehearsing what he was going to say, practicing the intonation which he would find necessary. Around him lama-astrologers took each sheet of paper and with two other lamas checking every sheet was placed in its correct order, there could be no possibility of error here, no possibility of reading from the wrong page and bringing the College of Astrologers into disrepute. As each book was completed its wooden cover was placed on top and the book was held together with twice the customary number of tapes just so that everything would be doubly sure.

The monk assigned to be the personal attendant of the Chief Astrologer was carefully brushing his best robe, making sure that the zodiacal signs with which it was embellished were bright and fixed on securely. Then, as he was an old man, he used two sticks and those two sticks were carefully examined for any unsuspected flaws or cracks, after which they were passed to a polishing-monk who polished them until they shone like burnished copper.

From the temple areas the gongs boomed, the trumpets blared, and there was a susurrant of scurrying feet as the religious monks went about their first night service. The astrological monks had been excused attendance because of the importance of the task allotted to them, because they could not risk dropping everything to go to service and then finding on the morrow that some error had crept in.

So at last the butter lamps were extinguished one by one. Soon there was no light except the light of the heaven, the starlight and the moonlight, but the starlight and the moonlight were augmented by the brilliant reflections from the lakes and rivers which traversed and crisscrossed the Plain of Lhasa. Every so often a dazzling sheet of water would cascade in a burst of glittering silver, like molten silver, as some great fish rushed up to the surface for a gulp of air.

All was silent except for the croaking of bull frogs and the cries of night birds in the distance. The Moon sailed in solitary splendor across the purple sky, the light of the dimmed as clouds from India obscured their glimmer. Night was upon the land, and all those except the creatures of the night slept.

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CHAPTER THREE

The first faint light appeared over the jagged Eastern horizon. Great mountain ranges stood up in the starkest black and behind them the sky was becoming luminous. On the topmost floor of the lamaseries monks and lamas stood ready to greet the new day, the topmost floor—the roof—in each case had a special platform or parapet on which great conches and trumpets some fifteen to twenty feet long stood on stands.

The Valley of Lhasa was a pool of inky black. The Moon had long since set, and the stars were diminished by the paling of the sky beyond the Eastern mountains. But the Valley of Lhasa still slept, still lived in the deepest darkness of night, not until the Sun lifted well above the mountains would the deep-lying lamaseries and houses welcome daylight.

Here and there dotted randomly throughout the Valley infrequent pinpoints of light appeared as a lama or a cook or a herdsman had to prepare for a very early start to his work. The faint, faint gleams served merely to accentuate the velvet blackness, so black that not even the trunk of tree could be distinguished.

The light beyond the Eastern mountains increased. First there was a vivid flash of light, then a red beam shot up, followed immediately by what appeared to be an absolutely green shaft of light which was one of the features of the early morning sunrise and the late night sunset. Soon there came broader shafts of light, and within minutes there was a startling golden glow outlining the high peaks, showing the ever-present snow reflecting off high glaciers and projecting down into the Valley the first signs that the day had appeared. With the first appearance of the sun over the topmost edge of the mountains the lamas blew hard into their trumpets, and others sounded into the conches so that the very air seemed to shake with the sound. There was no immediate reaction to the noise, though, for the people of the Valley were well used to the sound of trumpets and conches and could ignore it just as people in cities can ignore the roaring of aircraft, the clattering of garbage collections, and all the rest of the noises of “civilization.”

Here and there, though, a sleepy night bird uttered a startled chirp before putting his head beneath his wing again and going off to sleep. Now was the time of the creatures of the day. Gradually the day birds came awake, cheeping sleepily and then flapping their wings to get rid of the stillness of the night. Here and there a feather drifted down and was blown at the whim of the vagrant breeze.

In the waters of the Kyi Chu and at the Snake Temple fish were stirring lazily from their night time drifting near the surface. Fish in Tibet could always rise near the surface because Buddhists do not take life and there were no fishermen in Tibet.

The old man twisted at the sound of the bugles and the roaring of the conches, twisted and sleepily sat upright. From his low angle he peered upwards at the sky, and then a sudden thought struck him and he rose creakily to his feet. His bones were aged, his muscles tired, so he rose with circumspection and made his way to a window and looked out—looked out across the now-awakening City of Lhasa. Below him in the Vil-

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lage of Sho little lights were beginning to appear, one after another, as butter lamps were being lit so that official who were going to be busy this day would have ample time for their preparations.

The aged Astrologer shivered in the early dawn chill, and pulled his robe more tightly around him. Inevitably thoughts turned to the Lhalu estate which could not be seen from his vantage point for he looked out over the village of Sho and the City of Lhasa, and the Lhalu residence was at the other side of the Potala facing the wall with the carved figures which was so much an attraction for wandering pilgrims.

The old man slowly lowered himself again to his blankets, and rested while he thought of the events of the day. This day, he thought, would be one of the high points of his career, perhaps the culminating point of his career. Already the old man could feel the hand of approaching death upon him, he could feel the slowing down of his body processes, he could feel that already his Silver Cord was thinning. But he was glad that there was yet one more function he could perform and bring credit to the office of Chief Astrologer of Tibet. So thinking he dozed off, to be awakened with something of a start as a lama bustled into the room exclaiming: "Honorable Astrologer, the Day is upon us, we have no time to lose, we have again to check the horoscope and the order in which the points are to be presented. I will assist you to rise, Honorable Astrologer".

So saying, he bent down and put an arm around the shoulders of the old man and gently raised him to his feet.

By now the heat was increasing rapidly, the sun was clear of the Eastern mountain range and was reflecting light to the Western side of the Valley; while those houses and lamaseries right beneath the Eastern range were yet in darkness, those on the opposite side were in almost full daylight.

The Potala was coming awake. There was the strange stir which humans always make when they are getting themselves into motion at the beginning of a day, there was a feeling of awareness that here were humans ready to continue the sometimes tedious business of living. Little silver bells were tinkling, every so often there would come the lowing of a conch or perhaps the brassy blare of a trumpet. The old Astrologer and the others around him were not aware of the clanking and turning of the Prayer Wheels, these were so much a part of their everyday existence that they had long since failed to perceive the noise the Prayer Wheels made, just as no longer did they notice the Prayer Flags which whipped to the morning breeze on the Potala heights above. Only a cessation of these noises would have been noticed by the startled people. There was the scurry of feet along corridors, there was the moving of heavy doors. From somewhere came the chanting of psalm, religious psalm, psalms again welcoming the new day. But the old Astrologer had no time to notice things such as these for now there was the business of coming to full awareness and to attending to those functions which are so necessary after a night of sleep.

Soon he would be having his morning meal of tsampa and tea, and then he would have to go and attend to the ritual of preparing for the Reading which he was that day to give.

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At the Lhalu family residence the servants were awake. Lady Rampa, too, was awake. And Lord Rampa, after a hasty breakfast, gladly mounted his horse and rode off with his attendants to the offices of the government in the Village of Sho. He was indeed glad to get away from his wife, get away from her bustling officiousness and her over-zealous approach to the events facing them. He had to make an early start to his work because later in the day it would be utterly incumbent upon him to return to play the part of the gracious host who was a Prince of Lhasa.

The heir to the Rampa estates was awakened and came to life most reluctantly. Today was “his” day, yet, he thought with some confusion, how could it be his day when Mother was planning to make such a social advantage from it. If he had his way he would forget the idea and disappear to the banks of the river so that he could watch the boatman ferrying people across the river, and perhaps when there were not many people to be ferried he could manage to con the ferryman into giving him free passage backwards and forwards, always with the excuse, of course, that he would help pole the ferry.

The poor wretched boy was most unhappy at the hard-hearted man servant who was thoroughly smearing his pigtail with yak butter, and then plaiting a tight pigtail with a curious twist in it. The yak butter was kneaded into the pigtail until the latter was almost as stiff as a willow rod.

At about ten in the morning there was the sound and clatter of horses and a party of men rode in to the courtyard. The Lord Rampa and his attendants had returned from the government offices because it was necessary that the family should go to the Cathedral of Lhasa to give thanks for whatever mysteries were to be revealed on this day and, of course, to show to priests ever ready to believe that “blackheads” were irreligious that these were specially religious “black heads.” In Tibet monks have shaven heads, while the ordinary people, the laity, had long hair, most times it was black hair, and because of the black hair they were referred to as black heads.

People were waiting in the courtyard, Lady Rampa already upon a pony, and her daughter Yasodhara. At the last moment the heir of the family was grabbed and unceremoniously hoisted upon a pony who appeared equally reluctant. The gates were again opened and the party rode out with the Lord Rampa at the head. For about thirty minutes they rode in strange silence until at last they came to the small houses and the shops which surrounded the Cathedral of Lhasa, the Cathedral which had stood there for so many hundreds of years to afford a place of worship for the pious. The original stone floors were deeply grooved and scored by the footsteps of pilgrims and sight-seers. All along the entrance to the Cathedral were lines of Prayer Wheels-big things indeed-and as each person went by they turned the Wheel as was the custom so that a most curious tinkling clatter was set up which had an almost hypnotic effect.

The inside of the Cathedral was heavy—overpowering in its heaviness—with the scent of incense and the memory of incense which had been burned during the past thirteen or fourteen hundred years. The heavy black beams of the roof seemed to have clouds of incense growing from them, bluish smoke, grey smoke, and occasionally a smoke of a brownish hue.

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There were various Gods and Goddesses represented in golden figures, wooden figures, and porcelain figures, and before each were the offerings of pilgrims. Every so often the offerings would be swept behind a metal net to protect them from pilgrims whose piety was overcome by the desire to participate in the wealth of the Gods.

Heavy candles burned and made flickering shadows throughout the dim building. It was a sobering thought even to a small boy not yet seven years of age to reflect that these candles had been kept alight by pouring on butter throughout thirteen or fourteen hundred years. The poor boy gazing wide-eyed around him thought, "Let's get this day over and perhaps I shall be able to go to some other country, away from all this holiness." Little did he know what was in store for him!

A big cat strolled lethargically forward and rubbed against the legs of the heir of the Rampa family. The boy stooped and dropped to his knees to fondle the big cat who roared with delight. These were the guardian cats of the temple, astute students of human nature who could tell at a glance those who would be likely to attempt to steal and those who could be trusted. Normally such cats would never, never approach anyone other than their own particular keeper. For a moment there was stunned silence among the onlookers, and some of the monks faltered in their chanting as their eyes wandered to the sight of the boy on his knees by the big cat. The picture was soon spoiled, however, because the Lord Rampa, his face suffused with rage, bent down and picked up the boy by the scruff of his neck, shook him like a housewife shaking out a duster, gave him a slap on the ear which made the boy think there was a thunderstorm, and then dumped him on his feet again. The cat turned toward His Lordship and uttered a very long, loud hiss, and then turned with dignity and strode away.

But the time had come to return to the Lhalu residence for soon the guests would start arriving. Many of the guests came early so that they could get the pick of what was offered, and the pick of what was offered included the best place in the garden. So the party left the confines of the Cathedral and went out into the street again. The boy raised his eyes and saw the flags fluttering over the road which led to India, and he thought, "Shall I soon be on that road going to another count I shall soon know I suppose, but, my goodness, I would like something to eat.

The party rode on retracing their footsteps, and after twenty-five to thirty minutes they were again entering the courtyard of the house where they were greeted by an anxious Steward who thought that there might have been some delay and that he would have to explain to irate guests that the host and hostess had been unaccountably delayed at the Cathedral.

There was time for a hurried meal, and then the heir to the estates rushed to the window at unexpected noises approaching up the road. Monk-musicians were arriving, their musical instruments were clattering as they rode along the road on their ponies. Every so often a monk would give an experimental blow to his trumpet or clarinet to make sure that it was in tune. Now and again a monk would give a hearty bonk to a drum to make sure that the skin was at the correct tautness. Eventually they entered the courtyard and went by the side path into the gardens, carefully depositing their instruments

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on the ground. The instruments deposited, they reached for the Tibetan beer gladly. The beer was there in some profusion to prepare them—to get them in the right mood to make jovial music instead of sombre classical stuff.

But there was no time to deal with the musicians, the first of the guests were arriving. They came in a body. It seemed as if all Lhasa was moving on to the Lhalu residence. Here came a small army of men on horseback, all heavily armed, it was something like the invading army sent by the British, but this army was armed only because ceremony and protocol demanded it. They rode with men on the outside, and between the lines of men the women rode where they were adequately protected from any imaginary attack. The armed servitors had their spears and pikes gaily decorated with flags and with pennants. Here and there, as a monk was in the party, Prayer Flags fluttered from a staff.

In the courtyard itself there were two lines of servants, headed by the Steward on one side and the Chief Household Priest on the other. There was much ado with bowing, returning bows, and bowing again as the guests were ushered in. Each guest was helped off his horse as if—as the heir to the household thought—they were all a lot of paralyzed dummies. Their horses were led away and given ample food. Then, depending upon the status of the guests, they were either shown into the garden and left to fend for themselves, or shown into the house where they would exclaim over this or that article, articles which had been put out especially to impress the guests! Of course, in Tibet scarves are given and received, and there was much confusion as the arriving guests presented scarves and then received scarves in return. Sometimes there was a most awkward incident when some bemused servant would unthinkingly hand back to the guest the scarf which he or she had just presented, there would be embarrassed smiles and muttered apologies, but soon the matter would be straightened out.

Lady Rampa was red of face and perspiring freely. She was terrified that the old Astrologer—the Chief Astrologer of all Tibet—must have died, or fallen into the river, or been trampled upon by a horse, or some similar mishap because there was no sign of him, and the purpose of the whole party was to have the Reading of the future for the heir to the household. Without the Chief Astrologer that could not be done.

A servant was dispatched at the run to ascend to the highest point in the house and to look out toward Potala, to see if there was any sign of the approaching cavalcade which would herald the impending arrival of the Astrologer. The servant departed and soon was seen on the topmost roof, he was gesticulating with his arms, and dancing little jig in his excitement.

Lady Rampa was furious, absolutely frustrated, she had no idea what the servant was trying to convey, it looked as if he were drunk more than anything else. So hastily she sent a fresh servant to get a report as to what was happening. Soon the two servants arrived together and explained that the Astrological cavalcade was just crossing the Plain of Kyi Chu. That was the signal for increased fervor. Lady Rampa ushered everyone out of the house and into the garden, telling them to take their places because the great Chief Astrologer was arriving any moment. The monk-musicians straightened up and started to play, making the air shake and vibrate with the excitement that they put

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into the event.

The Lhalu estate gardens were large and very well kept. There were trees from all over Tibet, even some from India, from Bhutan and Sikkim. Bushes, too, grew in great profusion with exotic blooms entrancing the eye. But now the wonderful showpiece of a garden was thronged with avid sightseers, people who had no thought for horticulture, people who were there for SENSATION. The Great Lord Rampa wandered disconsolately about, chewing on his knuckles with an agony of anguished frustration and at the same time trying to smile amiably at those people whom he felt he should beam upon.

Lady Rampa was almost wearing herself shorter by the amount of running about she was doing; she was in a continual bustle, trying to see the Lord Rampa wasn't too austere, trying to see what the heir to the estate was doing, what the servants were doing-and keeping a ready eye for the arrival of the Chief Astrologer.

There came the sound of horses' steps. The Steward hurried to the main gate which was carefully shut behind him. He stood ready to order its opening at just the right moment to make the maximum effect. Guests had heard the horses and were now streaming from the garden into a very large room which, for the occasion, had been converted into a refectory-reception room. Here they found buttered tea waiting for them and, of course, delicacies from India, very sweet sticky cakes which would effectively glue them up and prevent them from talking so much!

There came the sound of a deep-toned gong, its voice echoing and reverberating around the building, a mighty gong some five feet high and which was only used on the most solemn occasions. Now a highly placed man servant was standing by it giving it the special strokes which he had been practicing on a smaller gong for days past.

The gong boomed, the gate swung open, and into the courtyard wheeled a cavalcade of young monks, lamas, and the Chief Astrologer. He was an old man, wizened, small, some eighty years of age. Close beside him, almost leg to leg, in fact, rode two lamas whose sole duty it was to make sure that the aged man did not topple off and get trampled underfoot.

The horses came to a stop, knowing full well that the end of the journey had come and now they would be well fed. The two lama-attendants jumped off their horses and carefully lifted the old Astrologer. Then the Lord Rampa came forward and there was the customary exchange of scarves, the customary bowing, and bowing in return.

Then the Chief Astrologer and the Lord Rampa entered the reception room where all the assembled people bowed. For a few moments there was a certain amount of confusion and turmoil. Then the Chief Astrologer, having politely tasted the proffered buttered tea, motioned to two lamas who carried the notes and charts.

The deep-toned gong sounded again, boom, boom, boom-boom. The far end of the reception room was flung open and the Chief Astrologer and his two lama-attendants walked forward through the door, out into the garden to where a great marquee—especially imported from India—had been erected. One side of the marquee was open so that the maximum number of people should be able to see and hear what was going on.

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Inside the marquee of dais had been erected with rails on three sides and near the front were four seats.

The Chief Astrologer and his two lama-attendants approached the dais and then four servants appeared carrying upright poles, or flambeau, because at the distal end there were large flares showing that these men were recognizing that here in this marquee there were the flames of knowledge.

Four trumpeters next appeared. They sounded a fanfare. They were to draw attention to Lord and Lady Rampa because their son, the heir to the Lhalu estate, was the cause of all the "commotion," as one onlooker said. The Lord and Lady slowly mounted the dais, and stood behind the four chairs.

From another direction, and with their own retinue, there came two very very old men from the Lamasery of the State Oracle. These two old men from the Lamasery of Nechung were, after the Chief Astrologer, the most experienced astrologers in the country, they were collaborators with the Chief Astrologer, they had gone over the figures and charts and computations, and each of the sheets of the horoscope contained the seals of approval of each of these men.

The Chief Astrologer stood. The others sat. Suddenly there fell a hush upon the assembled company. The Chief Astrologer gazed out at the throng, and built up suspense by remaining quite silent for some moments, then at a gesture the two lamas moved forward, one to each side of him. The one on the right held the assembled book of the horoscope, the one on the left carefully removed the top wooden plaque, and the Chief Astrologer read his remarks.

People had to strain because, with age, the Astrologer had a thin, high voice which to those in the background blended with the birds who chirped in the topmost branches.

His opening remarks were the ritual remarks on such occasions; "Gods, devils, and men all behave in the same way," he said, "so the future can be foretold, but the future is not immutable. The Future can, within certain limits, be changed. Thus it is we can forecast only the probabilities, and having forecast the probabilities, predicted the good and the bad, then indeed we must leave the rest to those whose horoscopes we are reading. He stopped and looked about him, and the lama on the left removed the top sheet, leaving the second one exposed.

The Astrologer took a deep breath and continued, "Here we have the most remarkable horoscope that the three of us have ever computed." He turned and bowed slightly to his two collaborators. Then, clearing his throat, he continued, "This is the horoscope of a young boy just six years of age. It is the most difficult horoscope and the hardest Life which we have encountered."

Lord and Lady Rampa shifted uneasily. Certainly this wasn't turning out as they expected, they weren't at all happy. But, with the training of their caste, they maintained an inscrutable expression. Behind them the cause of all the trouble, the heir to the estate, Lobsang Rampa, felt gloomy indeed. All this waste of time. How many people would have been crossing the river? What was the boatman doing? Were the cats all right? He

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felt he had to stand there like a stuffed dummy while three ancient, almost fossilized men decided what he would have to do with his life. Surely, he thought, he should have some say in what he was going to do. People had been telling him how wonderful it was to be the heir to such an immense estate, saying what a credit he could be to his parents. Well, he thought, he wanted to be a ferryman, he wanted to look after cats somewhere; certainly he didn't want to work.

But the Astrologer was droning on, and there was a complete silence from the audience, they were indeed enthralled. "This boy must go to the Medical Lamasery at Chakpori, he must do his penance and his homage before he can be permitted to enter, and having entered he must start as the lowest of the low and work his way up. He must learn all the Medical arts of Tibet, he must for a time do that which is almost unmentionable; he must work with the Disposers of the Dead that, in cutting up bodies, he may understand the structure of the human body. Having done this he will return to Chakpori, and study yet again. He will be shown the innermost mysteries of our land, of our Belief, and of our Science."

The old man held out his hand, and an attendant quickly gave him a small silver beaker containing some liquid which he looked at and then swallowed. The attendant carefully took back the silver beaker and refilled it ready for the next demand.

The Astrologer went on: "Then shall come the time when no longer may he remain in this land of ours, instead he must journey to China to study medicine according to the Western style, for there is a Western School of Medicine in Chungking. At that School of Medicine he shall take a fresh name for let it not be known that the heir to Lhalu's shall be dealing with the bodies. Later he shall learn something which is quite incomprehensible to us at present, it is something which has not yet come about, something which is not yet properly invented. To our experienced brains it seems that he may do something which entails flying through the air, yet which is not the levitation which some of us can do here in Lhasa. So upon this particular aspect I must be obscure because indeed it is most obscure to the three of us. The boy, who then will be a young man, will have to work this out for himself, he will fly through the air by some means. Our pictures show something like the kites with which we are familiar, but this particular kite is not tethered to the ground by rope, instead it appears to be controlled by those who ride on it."

There was much muttering and urgent whispering from the congregation. This was wonders piled on wonders, never before had such things been spoken of. For a moment there was the uneasy shuffling of feet, and then the Astrologer took another drink and turned back to the, by now, diminishing sheets of paper.

"He shall have immense suffering, immense hardship, he shall enter a war against evil forces, he shall for some years be confined and undergo suffering such as few have undergone, the purpose of which will be to purify and to drive away the dross of any sensuality, and to build the power of the brain to endure. Later he shall get away from his captors after some immense explosion which throws a whole country, or a whole world, maybe, into confusion.

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He shall travel by means which we cannot identify across a vast continent, and at the end of that travel he shall again be incarcerated unjustly, suffering will come upon him there with at least as great measure as it did in the other confinement. At last, by the intervention of unknown people, he shall be released and forced out of that great continent. He shall wander into many countries, meeting many people, seeing many cultures, learning many things. And then at last he shall go to a country where once again he shall not be welcomed because of his difference. The suffering will have changed him enormously so that he no longer seems of our own kind, but different. And when humans meet anything which is different they fear that thing, and that which they fear they hate and try to destroy.”

The old man was looking tired. At last the senior attendant stepped forward, muttered to the Astrologer, and then said, “We will have a few minutes rest while our Chief Astrologer recuperates for the second half of this Reading. Let us, then, for the moment concentrate upon that which has been said so that we may the more easily assimilate that which is to follow.” The Chief Astrologer sat down, refreshments were brought to him, and he watched the throngs of people. And as he sat watching the throngs of people he thought of his boyhood, he thought of the times he had climbed the high mountains in the deepest of the night so he could gaze upon the stars arrayed in the Heavens above. He had pondered long upon the significance of those stars, did they have influence on people? He decided to find out. By various means, and probably because he was fated to do so, he entered the Lamasery of the State Oracle and he was found to have quite abnormal ability at Astrology, an Astrology, of course, which is far superior to that of the Western world, far more complete and far, far more accurate. It includes more variables and could be projected at greater depth.

The young man who was destined to be the Chief Astrologer of the whole of Tibet progressed rapidly, studying, studying, studying. He obtained the ancient texts of India, the texts of China, and almost rewrote the Science of Astrology in Tibet. As his skill rose his fame increased so that he was called upon by the heads of all the great houses of Lhasa, and then of other cities of Tibet. Soon he was called upon to do predictions for the government and for the Great Thirteenth himself. Always he was strictly honest. If he did not know, he said he did not know. He had predicted the British invasion, he had predicted the departure of the Great Thirteenth to another country, and his safe return, and he had made the prediction that there would be no real Dalai Lama after the Thirteenth had gone to the state of transition; there would be another but he would have been selected as a matter of political expediency in an attempt to assuage the territorial ambitions of the Chinese. He had made the prediction that in sixty years, or so, there would be the end of Tibet as it was then known, a completely fresh order would come into force which would cause extreme hardship and suffering, but might, if it were handled correctly, have the effect of sweeping away an outmoded system and bringing, after a hundred years or so, benefits to Tibet.

The Chief Astrologer sipped his buttered tea and looked at the people before him. He watched the way some of the young men looked at the young women, and the way in which the young women glanced back, coyly, invitingly.

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He thought of his long years as a celibate monk, nearly eighty years, he thought, and he hardly knew in which way a woman differed from a man. His knowledge was of the stars, of the influence of the stars, and of men and women as they were affected by the stars. He looked at comely young women and wondered if it really was right for monks to be celibate. Surely, he thought, mankind should consist of two parts, the male and the female principle, and unless the two parts are united there cannot be a complete Man. He thought of all the tales he had heard of how women were becoming more and more arrogant, more trying to rule. He looked about at some of the older women with their harsh faces, and he noted their domineering attitude. And then he thought, well, perhaps it is that the time is not yet ripe for man and woman to be united to form one whole, to form one complete entity.

But that will come, although not until the end of this round of existence. So thinking, he gave up his cup to an attendant, and signaled that he was ready to continue.

A hush again fell upon the assembly, people were looking up toward the dais. As the old man was assisted to his feet the books were again placed before him. He looked around once more, and said, "Some of the experiences which will befall the subject of this Reading are so far beyond our own experience that they cannot be predicted in a sufficiently accurate form to be worthwhile. It is known definitely that this person has a great, great Task to do, it is a Task which is of the utmost importance to the whole of humanity, not of Tibet alone. It is known that there are evil forces, very evil forces indeed, who are working hard to negate that which he must do.

"He will encounter hatred, he will encounter every form of hardship and suffering, he will know what it is to be at the point of death and have to undergo the ordeal of transmigration into another body so that the work may go forward. But here in this other body fresh problems will arise. He will be disowned by his own people because of that political expediency which I have already mentioned.

It will be considered to the benefit of a people as a whole that he be disowned, that he be not supported by those who should support him, by those who could support him, and I say again that these are probabilities because it is quite possible for our own people to support him and give him an opportunity to speak before the nations of the world so that, first, Tibet may be saved, and secondly, that great task whose exact nature may not be mentioned may be the more speedily accomplished. But weak people in temporary abridged authority shall not be strong enough to assist him and so he shall battle alone against the forces of evil, and against the uncaring people whom he is trying to help."

The old man looked around and motioned to the left-hand attendant to remove the next sheet. The attendant blushed a little at having to be reminded, and speedily did as he was bade. The Astrologer went on: "There is a special association or group which gives information to peoples of the world beyond our confines. They are of insufficient spiritual stature to understand the Task which has to be accomplished, and their sensational hatred shall make the Task immeasurably more difficult. As well as this there is a small group of people who will be filled with burning hatred and will do everything

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possible to ruin the subject of this horoscope and cause him every distress.”

The old man paused and put his hand on the topmost sheet as a signal that he had finished with the books. Then he turned and addressed the congregation, “With the years of my experience I say to you this; no matter how great the struggle, no matter how severe the suffering, the Task is worthwhile. The only battle that matters is the final battle. It does not matter who wins or who loses, the wars that continue until the final battle, and in the end the final battle shall be won by the powers of good, and that which has to be done shall be done.” He bowed three times to the people, and then turned and bowed three times to the Lord and Lady Rampa. Then he sat down to rest his legs which were shaking with the weight of years.

The audience, whispering among themselves, quickly dispersed and went into the gardens in search of entertainment, and there was much entertainment offered-music, acrobats, jugglers, and, of course, food and drink. After the Astrologer and his two collaborators had rested awhile they rose and went into the great house where they had more to say to the parents of Lobsang Rampa. They had more to say to Lobsang as well, to say privately, alone with him.

Soon the Chief Astrologer departed on his way back to the Potala, and his two collaborators departed on their journey to the Lamasery of the State Oracle.

The day wore on. There came the dusk, and at the warning of dusk the assembled people wended their way out of the great gate and along the roads so they may reach their own homes before night and the perils thereof came upon them.

The darkness fell and out in the road beyond the great gate a lonely little boy stood looking down the road at the last of the departing guests and the carousing which they were making. He stood with hands clasped, thinking of a life of misery which had been predicted, thinking of the horrors of war which he did not understand, thinking of the insensate persecution yet to come. He stood there alone, alone in all the world, and no one had such a problem. He stood there and the night grew darker, and no one came to seek him and to lead him back. At last, as the Moon was full above, he lay down by the side of the road-the gate was shut anyhow-and in minutes there came a purring beside his head and a great big cat lay down beside him. The boy put his arms around the cat, the cat purred louder. Soon the boy drifted off to a troubled sleep, but the cat was alert, watching, guarding.

So ends the First Book, As It Was In The Beginning.

BOOK TWO

The First Era.

CHAPTER FOUR

“Oh Lobsang, Lobsang,” quoth Mother, her face pale with anger. “You have brought us absolute disgrace, I am ashamed of you. Your Father is ashamed of you, he is

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so angry with you that he has gone to the office and will be there all day, that has upset all my engagements, and its all you, Lobsang!" So saying she turned abruptly and hurried off as if she couldn't bear to look at me any longer.

Ashamed of me? Why should she be ashamed of me? I didn't want to be a monk, I didn't want all the horrible things predicted for me. Anyone with a grain of sense would know that. The predictions of yesterday had filled me with horror. It had been like the ice devils trailing their fingers up and down my spine. So she was ashamed of me, was she?

Old Tzu hove into sight almost like a moving mountain, he was so large. He looked at me and said, "Well, young man, you're going to have a rough life, aren't you? I think you'll make it. If you could not have stood all the strains and temptations you would not have been chosen for such a task. The craftsman chooses his tools according to the task to be done. Perhaps—who knows?—the craftsman who chose you to be his instrument may have chosen better than he knew." I looked at old Tzu somewhat cheered, but only "somewhat," and then I said, "But, Tzu, how have I disgraced Mother, how have I disgraced Father? I haven't done anything. I didn't want to become a monk. I just don't understand what they mean. Everyone today seems to be full of hate for me. My sister won't speak to me, my Mother reviles me, and my Father won't even stay in the house with me, and I don't know why."

Old Tzu painfully lowered himself to sit cross-legged on the floor, his wounds inflicted by the British were sorely troubling him. He had had damage to a hip bone and now—well—he had pain all the time. But he sat on the floor and talked to me.

"Your Mother," he said, "is a woman of great social ambition. She thought that as a son of a Prince of Tibet, later to be a Prince in your own right, you would have gone to a big city in India and there you would have learned much of the affairs of the world. Your Mother thought that you would be a social asset to her, she thought that if you went to India and perhaps to other countries, then she also could have gone on visits, and that for years, even before your birth, has been her all-consuming ambition. Now you have been chosen for a special Task, but that's not what she wanted, its not what your Father wanted. They wanted a shining figure in the political arena, a socialite, not a monk who is going to have to struggle all his life, not a man who would wander the face of the Earth like a pariah, shunned by his fellows for telling the truth ostracized by those around him because he was trying to do a Task at which others have failed."

Old Tzu snorted loudly. All this seemed too utterly strange for belief. Why should I be penalized, victimized, for something I hadn't done and something I didn't want to do? All I wanted was to hang around the banks of the river and watch the ferrymen with their skin boats poling their way across the waters. All I wanted was to practice with my stilts and to fly my kites. But now—well, I just did not know what to make of things, I did not know why it had to be ME.

The days sped all too quickly, and at last as foretold I had to leave my home and go up the hill to the Chakpori Lamasery. There I had to undergo the ordeal of waiting, waiting outside the cynosure of all eyes. Small boys clustered around me as I sat cross-

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legged in the dust outside the great gates. The days were unendurably long, but I endured. The nights were unbearably tedious, but I bore them until at last that ordeal ended. I was admitted to the lamasery as the lowest of the low, a new boy, one who was fair game, one who was there to be picked on, who could have any manner of joke played upon him. The lowest of the low.

Time crawled, and I was homesick. I missed my home, I missed Tzu, I missed my sister Yasodhara; for the Mother who now had no love for me—well, I had strange sensations about her. Frankly, I missed her. Even more frankly, I felt guilty. How had I failed? Why were they so disappointed with me? How could I help that an astrologer had said I should go and suffer this and endure that? It wasn't my choice, no one in their right senses, I thought, would pick such a load of trouble as that which had been allocated to me.

I thought of my Father the last time I saw him before leaving home. He looked at me frozen-faced, he spoke to me harshly as if I were a stranger now, no longer with a home of my own, and no longer with parents of my own.

He treated me more severely than he would have treated a convict who came to the door begging for food. He told me that I had disgraced the family by having such a karma that I had to be a monk, a lama, a wanderer, who would be mocked, sneered at and disbelieved.

Yasodhara—well, I just didn't know what to make of her attitude. She changed. We used to play together like any normal brother and sister, we used to get on passably well, just, in fact, like normal brothers and sisters do get on "passably well." But now she gave me such strange glances as if I were a stray dog that had crept in to the house and left an unwanted gift in some corner. The servants no longer showed me respect, the respect due to the heir of the Lhalu estates. To them I was just something which was lodged there for a few days until the seventh birthdate should come. Then on the seventh birthdate I would wander off alone without a word of good-bye from anyone, up the long and lonely path leading toward a career which I would not have wished upon my worst enemies.

At Chakpori there was the constant reek of drying herbs, the constant swish of herbal tea. Here much time was devoted to the herbalist code, and less time to religious disciplines. But we had very good tutors, all of them elderly men, some in fact had even been as far away as India.

I remember one elderly monk, or I should say lama, who was giving us a lecture, and then he got on to the subject of transmigration. "In the days of long ago," he said, "in fact long before recorded history began, giants walked upon the Earth. They were the Gardeners of the Earth, those who came here to supervise the development of life on this planet, because we are not the first Round of Existence here, you know, but like gardeners clearing a plot of land all life had been removed and then we, the human race, had been left here to make our own way, to make our own development." He stopped and looked around to see if his pupils were at all interested in the subject which he was propounding. To his gratified astonishment he found that people were indeed deeply interested in his remarks.

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“The Race of Giants,” he went on, “were not very suitable for life on Earth, and so by magical means the Race of Giants shrank until they were the same size as humans, thus they were able to mingle with humans without being recognized as the Gardeners. But it was often necessary for a different senior Gardener to come and carry out special tasks, it took too long to have a boy born to a woman and then wait out the years of his babyhood and childhood and teenage. So the science of the Gardeners of the Earth had a different system; they grew certain bodies and made sure that those bodies would be compatible with the spirit who would later inhabit them.”

A boy sitting in the front suddenly spoke up: “How could a spirit inhabit another person?” The lama teacher smiled upon him and said, “I was just about to tell you. But the Gardeners of the Earth permitted certain men and women to mate so that a child was born to each, and the growth of that child would be most carefully supervised throughout, perhaps, the first fifteen or twenty or thirty years of life. Then there would come a time when a highly placed Gardener would need to come to Earth within a matter of hours, so helpers would place the trained body into a trance, into stasis, or, if you like, into a state of suspended animation. Helpers in the astral world would come to the living body together with the entity who wanted to go to Earth, with their special knowledge they could detach the Silver Cord and connect in its place the Silver Cord of the entity who was the Gardener of the Earth coming to the Earth. The host would then become the vehicle of the Gardener of the Earth, and the astral body of the host would go away to the astral world just as he would do in the case of a person who had died.

“This is called transmigration, the migration of one entity into the body of another. The body taken over is known as the host, and it has been known throughout history, it was practised extensively in Egypt and it gave rise to what is known as embalming because in those days in Egypt there were quite a number of bodies kept in a state of suspended animation, they were living but unmoving, they were ready for occupancy by higher entities just as we keep ponies waiting for a monk or lama to mount the animal and ride off somewhere.”

“Oh my!” exclaimed one boy, “I expect friends of the host were mightily surprised when the body awakened and the one they had thought of as their friend in the past was possessed of all knowledge. My! I wouldn't like to be a host, it must be a terrible feeling to have someone else take over one's body.”

The teacher laughed and said, “It would certainly be a unique experience. People still do it. Bodies are still prepared, specially raised so that if the need arises a different entity can take over a fresh body if it becomes necessary for the good of the world as a whole.”

For days after the boys had discussed it, and in the way of boys some of them pretended that they were going to be taking over bodies. But to me, thinking back on that dread prediction, it was no joke, it wasn't amusing to me, it was an ordeal to even think about it. It was a continual shock to my system, so great a shock that at times I thought I would go insane.

One tutor in particular was intrigued by my love of cats and the cats' obvious love

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for me. The tutor knew full well that cats and I conversed telepathically. One day after school hours he was in a very good mood indeed, and he saw me lying on the ground with four or five of our temple cats sitting on me. He laughed at the sight and bade me accompany him to his room, which I did with some apprehension because in those days a summons to a Lama's quarters usually meant a reprimand for something done or not done, or extra tasks to be accomplished. So I followed him at a respectful distance, and once in his rooms he told me to sit down while he talked to me about cats.

"Cats," he said, "are now small creatures, and they cannot speak in the human tongue but only by telepathy. Many, many years ago, before this particular Round of Existence, cats populated the Earth. They were bigger they were almost as big as our ponies, they talked to each other, they could do things with their forepaws, which then they called hands. They engaged in horticulture and they were largely vegetarian cats. They lived among the trees and their houses were in the great trees. Some of the trees were very different from those we now know upon the Earth, some of them, in fact, had great hollows in them like caves, and in those hollows, or caves, the cats made their homes. They were warm, they were protected by the living entity of the tree, and altogether they were a very congenial community. But one cannot have perfection with any species because unless there is some competition unless there is some dissatisfaction to spur one on, then the creature having such euphoria degenerates."

He smiled at the cats who had followed me and who were now sitting around me, and then he went on, "such happened to our brothers and sisters Cat. They were too happy, too contented, they had nothing to spur their ambition, nothing to drive them on to greater heights. They had no thought except that they were happy. They were like those poor people we saw recently who were bereft of sanity, they were content just to lie beneath the trees and let the affairs of the day take care of themselves. They were static, and so being static they were a failure. As such the Gardeners of the Earth rooted them out as though they were weeds and the earth was allowed to lie fallow for a time. And in the course of time the Earth had reached such a stage of ripeness that again it could be restocked with a different type of entity. But the cats—well, their fault had been that they had done nothing, neither good nor bad. They had existed and that alone—existed.

"And so they were sent down again as small creatures like those we see here, they were sent to learn a lesson, they were sent with the inner knowledge that **THEY** had once been the dominant species, so they were reserved, very careful to whom they gave their friendship.

"They were sent to do a task, the task of watching humans and reporting the progress or the failures of humans so that when the next Round came much information would have been provided by cats. Cats can go anywhere, they can see anything, they can hear anything, and, not being able to tell a lie, they would record everything precisely as it occurred."

I know that I was quite frightened for the time being! I wondered what the cats were reporting about me. But then one old tom, a champion of many a fight, gave a "Rrrr"

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and jumped on my shoulders and butted his head against mine, so I knew everything was all right and they would not report me too badly.

Sometime after I lay upon my face on my blanket on the floor of the infirmary because I had been very badly burned at the top of my left leg, the scars are with me yet, and the disfunction occasioned by the burn is one from which I still suffer. I was lying upon my face because I couldn't lie upon my back, and a well-loved lama entered and said, "Later, Lobsang, when you are healed and mobile I am going to take you to a certain peak in the mountains. I have there something to show you because, you know, the Earth has undergone many changes, the Earth has changed, the seas have altered, the mountains have grown. I am going to show you things which not more than ten people in the whole of Tibet have seen during the past hundred years. So hurry up and get better, hurry up and heal, you have something of interest before you."

It was some months later when my Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, who meant so much to me and who was more than mother and father and brother to me, led me along a path. He went a few feet ahead on a strong horse, and I rode behind him on a pony who was as wary of me as I was of him. He recognized me as a bad rider and I recognized him as a horse who recognized a bad rider. We had what in later years I would have called an armed neutrality, a sort of—well, if you don't do anything I won't either, we've got to live together somehow. But we rode on, and at long last my Guide stopped. I leaned over and slithered sideways off the pony. The trail ropes were dropped and the horse and pony would not then wander away, they were too well-trained.

My Guide lit a fire, and we sat down to a very sparse supper. There was desultory talk for a time about the wonders of the Heavens spread out above us. We were in the shadow of the mountains and strong purple patches of darkness were sweeping across the Valley of Lhasa as the Sun sank down beyond the Western range. At last all was dark except for the faint twinkling butter lamps from a myriad of houses and lamaseries, and except for the glory of the Heavens above which sent forth their faint twinkling speckles of light.

At last my Guide said, "Now we must go to sleep, Lobsang, there are no temple services tonight to disturb you, no temple services in the morning for which you have to awaken. Sleep well for on the morrow we shall see things that you have never before dreamed possible." So saying, he rolled himself up in his blanket, turned on his side—and went to sleep—just like that. I lay for a time trying to scoop a hole in the rock because my hip bone seemed to stick out a long way, and then I turned on my face for my scars were still causing pain, and then I too eventually went to sleep.

The morning dawned bright. From our altitude in the mountains it was fascinating to watch how the early morning rays of the Sun seemed to shoot horizontally across the valley and illuminate the peaks on the Western horizon with what appeared to be golden fingers of fire. Indeed for a time it looked as if the whole mountain range was afire. We stood and watched, and then simultaneously we turned and smiled at each other.

After a light breakfast—the breakfast always seemed too light for me!—we watered the horses at a small mountain stream, and then, providing them with ample for-

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age which, of course, we had brought with us, we tied them together with about thirty feet space between them. They had plenty of room in which to roam and graze off the sparse grass.

The Lama Mingyar Dondup led the way up the trackless mountainside. By an immense boulder which seemed set immovably into the cliff face, he turned and said, "In your travels you are going to see much which appears to be magic, Lobsang. Here is a first sample of it." Then he turned, and to my horrified amazement he wasn't there any longer! He just disappeared in front of my eyes. Then his voice came from "somewhere" bidding me to step forward. As I did so I found that what appeared to be a strip of moss hanging on the cliff face was, in fact, some loose liands. I approached, and the lama held the fronds aside for me so that I might enter. He turned and I followed him, gazing about me in awe. This seemed to be a wide, wide tunnel, and light was coming in from some source which I could not discern. I followed his receding footsteps, chiding myself for my tardiness, for, as I well realized, if I was going to be too slow I might get lost in this mountain tunnel.

For a time we walked on, sometimes in pitch darkness where I had to feel with a hand lightly brushing the wall at one side. I was not bothered about pits or low hanging rocks because my Guide was very much larger than I and if he had room, well then, there would be room for me.

After some thirty minutes of walking, sometimes in a stifling dead air atmosphere, and sometimes in a bracing mountain breeze, we came to what appeared to be a lighted area. My Guide stopped. I stopped, too, when I reached him and looked about me. I caught my breath in astonishment. This seemed to be a large chamber, I suppose fifty or sixty feet across, and on the walls there were strange carvings, carvings which I failed to understand. It seemed to be very strange people dressed in remarkable clothing which appeared to cover them from head to foot, or, more accurately, from neck to foot because on their heads they had a representation of what seemed to be a transparent globe. Above us, as I looked up, there seemed to be an immense cube, and at the end of that I could just discern a fleecy cloud floating by.

My Guide broke into my thoughts: "this is a very strange area, Lobsang," he told me, "thousands and thousands of years ago there was a mighty civilization upon this Earth. It was known as the time of Atlantis. Some of the people of the Western world to which in later years you will go think of Atlantis as a legend, as an imaginary place dreamed up by some great storyteller. Well," he mused, "to my regret I have to tell you that many people will think that you have dreamed up your own true experiences, but never mind how much you are doubted, never mind how much you are disbelieved, you know the truth, you will live the truth. And here in this chamber you have proof that there was Atlantis."

He turned and led the way yet further into this strange tunnel. For a time we walked in absolute inky darkness, our breath coming hard in the stale, dead air. Then again there came the freshness, from somewhere a pleasant breeze was blowing. The deadness vanished and soon we saw a glimmer of light ahead of us. I could see my Guide's

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figure bulking in the tunnel, limned by light ahead of me. Now with fresh air in my lungs I hurried to catch up with him. Again he stopped in a large chamber.

Here there were more strange things. Someone had apparently carved great shelves in the rock, and on those shelves there were strange artifacts which were without any meaning whatever to me. I looked at them, and gently touched some of these things. They seemed to me machines. There were great discs with strange grooves on them. Some of the discs appeared to be of stone and they were, perhaps, six feet across with an undulating wave on their surface and in the centre of the disc a hole. It meant nothing to me. So I turned from fruitless speculation and examined the paintings and the carvings which adorned the walls. They were strange pictures, large cats who walked on two legs, tree houses with curled cats inside, there were things which seemed to be floating in the air and below on what was obviously the ground humans were pointing upwards at these things. It was all so much above me that it made my head ache.

My Guide said, "these are passages which reach to the ends of the Earth. The Earth has a spine, just as we have Lobsang, but the spine of the Earth is of rock. In our spine we have a tunnel, it is filled with liquid in our case, and our spinal cord goes through. Here this is the spine of the Earth, and this tunnel was man-made in the days of Atlantis when they knew how to make rock flow like water without generating heat. Look at this rock;" he said, turning and rapping on a wall. "This rock is fused to almost total hardness. If you take a great stone and slam it against this rock face you would do no harm whatever except to the stone which may shatter. I have traveled extensively and I know that this rocky spine extends from the North Pole to the South Pole."

He motioned that we should sit, so we sat cross-legged upon the floor right beneath the hole which extended up to the open air and through which we could see the darkness of the sky.

"Lobsang," said my Guide, "there are many things on this Earth which people do not understand, there are things inside this Earth too because, contrary to common belief, the Earth is indeed hollow and there is another race of people living inside this Earth. They are more developed than we are, and sometimes some of them come out of the Earth in special vehicles." He stopped and pointed to one of the strange things in the pictures, and then he continued, "these vehicles come out of the Earth and they fly around on the outside of the Earth to see what people are doing and to ascertain if their own safety is jeopardized by the folly of those whom they term the "outsiders".

Inside the Earth, I thought, what a strange place to be living, it must be frightfully dark down there, I don't like the thought of living in the dark, a butter lamp is such a comfort. My Guide laughed at me as he picked up my thoughts, and he said, "Oh, its not dark inside the Earth, Lobsang. They have a Sun something like we have but theirs is much smaller and very much more powerful. They have much more than we have, they are very much more intelligent. But in the days before you, you shall know more about the people of the Inner Earth. Come!"

He rose to his feet and went off through a tunnel which I had not seen, a tunnel diverging to the right, it sloped down, down. We seemed to walk endlessly in darkness.

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Then my Guide bade me stop where I was. I could hear him fiddling and fumbling about, and there was a clatter that sounded like a rock being moved. Then there were a few sparks as he struck the flint upon steel. There came a dull glow as the tinder ignited, he blew upon it, and then as the tinder burst into small flame he thrust the end of some sort of stick into the flame where it burst into brilliant light.

He held his torch at arm's length slightly above him and called me to come to his side. I did so and he pointed to the wall in front of us. The tunnel ended and in front of us was an absolutely smooth impenetrable surface which gleamed brightly in the flickering light of the flare. "That Lobsang," said my Guide, "is as hard as diamond, in fact some of us came here years ago with a diamond and we tried to scratch the surface and we ruined the diamond. This is a passage which leads to the world inside. It was sealed, we believe, by the inside-worlders to save their civilization during a great flood which struck this Earth. We believe that if this was opened—that is, if we could open it—people would come pouring out and overwhelm us for daring to intrude upon their privacy.

"We of the higher lama class have often visited this place and tried to commune with those below by telepathy. They have received our messages but they want nothing to do with us, they tell us that we are warlike, that we are as ignorant children trying to blow up the world, trying to ruin peace, they tell us by telepathy that they are keeping check on us and if necessary they will intervene. So we can go no further here, this is the end, this is the blocked line between the upper and the inner worlds. All right, we will go back to the chamber."

He carefully extinguished the flare, and we felt our way back to where the glowing light from the sky above shone down through the hole in the roof. In that chamber again the lama pointed in another direction, and said, "If we had the strength and the time we could walk right away to the South Pole by following that tunnel. Some of us have covered miles and miles, bringing ample food with us and camping by night, or what we deemed to be night. We traveled endless miles over six months, and at times we came up through a tunnel and found that we were in a strange land indeed but we dared not show ourselves. Always the exits were very very carefully camouflaged."

We sat down and ate our small meal. We had been traveling a long time and exhaustion was setting in for me although my Guide seemed to be immune from exhaustion or even ordinary tiredness. He talked to me and told me all manner of things. He said, "When I was being trained as you are being trained now I too went through the Ceremony of the Small Death, and I was shown the Akashic Record, I was shown the things that had been, and I saw that our Tibet was once a pleasant watering place beside a glittering sea. The temperatures were warm, perhaps even excessively so, and there was profuse foliage and palm trees and all manner of strange fruits which then meant nothing at all to me. But from the Akashic Record

"I saw a truly wondrous civilization, I saw strange craft in the sky, I saw people with remarkable cone-shaped heads who walked about, who had their entertainments, who made love, but also made war. Then, as I saw in this Record, the whole country shook and the sky turned black the clouds were as dark as night, their undersides lit with

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flickering games. The land shuddered and opened. It seemed that everything was fire. Then the sea rushed in to the newly opened land, and there were tremendous explosions, explosion after explosion, it seemed that the Sun stood still and the Moon rose no more. People were becoming overwhelmed by tremendous floods of water, people were being seared to death by flames which appeared from I know not where, but the flames flickered with a vile purplish glow, and as they touched people the flesh fell from their bones leaving the skeletons to fall to the ground with a clatter.

“Day succeeded day and the turmoil increased, although one would have said that such a thing was impossible, and then there came a ripping, searing explosion, and everything turned dark, everything was as black as the soot which comes from too many butter lamps burning untrimmed.

“After a time which I could not calculate,” he said, “the gloom became lighter, the darkness was diminishing and when the light of day finally appeared after I know not how long I looked at the picture with utter terror. Now I found that I was looking at a vastly different landscape, the sea was no more, a ring of mountains had sprung up in the darkness and encircled what previously had been the city of a most high civilization. I looked about me in fascinated horror, the sea had gone, the sea—well, there was no more sea, instead there were mountains and ring upon ring of mountains. Now I could tell that we were thousands of feet higher, and although I was seeing the Akashic Record I was sensing as well, I could sense the rarity of the air, there was no sign of life here, no sign whatever. And as I looked the picture vanished and I found myself back from whence I had started, in the deepest levels of the mountain of Potala where I had been undergoing the Ceremony of the Little Death and given much information.”

For a time we sat there meditating upon the past, and my Guide said to me, “I see you are meditating, or attempting to meditate. Now there are two very good ways of meditating, Lobsang. You must be content, you must be tranquil. You cannot meditate with a disturbed mind, and you cannot meditate with a whole gathering of people. You have to be alone or with just one person whom you love.”

He regarded me, and then said, “You must always look at something black or at something which is white. If you look at the ground you may be distracted by a grain of pebble, or you may be doubly distracted by some insect. To meditate successfully you must always gaze at that which offers no attraction to the eye, either entire black or pure white. Your eyes then become sick of the whole affair and become, as it were, disassociated from the brain, so then the brain having nothing to distract it optically is free to obey what your subconscious requires, and thus if you have instructed your subconscious that you are going to meditate, meditate you will. You will find in that sort of meditation that your senses are heightened, your perceptions more acute, and that is the only meditation worthy of the name. In the years which will come to you, you will encounter many cults proffering meditation at a price, but that is not meditation as we understand it nor is it meditation as we want it. It is just something which cultists play with, and it has no virtue.”

So saying he rose to his feet exclaiming, “We must get back for the day is far

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advanced. We shall have to spend another night in the mountains for it is too late to start off for Chakpori.”

He set off down the tunnel and I jumped to my feet and scurried after him. I had no desire to be left in this place where inside-worlders, or whatever they liked to call themselves, could perhaps pop up and take me down with them. I did not know what they would be like, I did not know how they would like me, and I certainly did not want to stay alone in the dark of that place. So I hurried, and at last we reached again that entrance by which we had entered.

The horse and the pony were resting peacefully, and we sat down beside them and made our simple preparations for our meal. The light was already far gone, much of the Valley was in darkness. At our altitude the Western Sun was yet shining upon us, but the orb itself was dipping ever more deeply beneath the mountains on its path to illumine other parts of the world before returning to us. After some small talk we rolled ourselves in our blankets again and committed ourselves to sleep.

CHAPTER FIVE

Life at Chakpori was hectic. The amount of things I had to learn really shocked me; herbs—where they grew, when to gather them, and be sure that if they were gathered at the wrong time they would be quite useless. That, I was taught, was one of the great secrets of herbalism. The plants, or the leaves, or the barks, or the roots could only be gathered efficiently within the span of two or three days. The Moon had to be right, the stars had to be right, and then the time had to be right also. One must also feel tranquil when gathering such herbs because, so I was told, one who gathered herbs when in a bad mood would make the herbs not worth the taking.

Then we had to dry the things. That was quite a task. Only certain parts of herbs were useful. Some needed to have just the tips of the leaves removed, others needed to have stalks or bark, and each plant or herb had to be treated in its own individual way and regarded with respect.

We took the barks and rubbed them between hands specially cleaned for the purpose—an ordeal in itself!—and so the bark would be reduced to a certain size, sort of granular powder. And then everything had to be laid out on a spotlessly clean floor, no polish on this floor, just rub, rub, rub until there was no dust, no stain, no mark. Then everything was left out and left to Nature to “dry-seal” the virtues of the herb within that which we had before us.

We made herbal tea, that is, infusions of steeped herbs, and I could never understand how people could get the noxious stuff down their throats. It seemed to be an axiom that the worse the taste and the stronger the smell the more beneficial the medicine, and I will say from my own observation that if a medicine is sufficiently evil-tasting the poor wretched patient will get better out of fright rather than take the medicine. It is like when one goes to the dentist, the pain will have vanished so that one hesitates on the doorstep wondering whether one should go through with it. It reminds me rather of the pallid and

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anxious young man—a recent bridegroom who was accompanying his very, very pregnant bride to the hospital for “her time was upon her.” As he turned before the Reception Desk he said, “Oh gee, honey, are you sure you really want to go through with this?”

As a special student, one who had to learn more, faster, I was not confined only to Chakpori. My time was also devoted to studies at the Potala. Here I had all the most learned lamas, each to teach me his own specialty. I learned various forms of medicine. I learned acupuncture, and in later years, with the weight of many years of experience, I came to the inescapable conclusion that acupuncture was a wondrous thing indeed for those of the East, those who have been long-conditioned to acupuncture. But when, as I found in China, you get sceptical Westerners to deal with—well, unfortunately, they were hypnotised by their own disbelief of anything that didn't come from “God's own country.”

There were sacred passages to be seen deep, deep below the mountain of Potala. Down below there was an immense cave with what seemed to be an inland sea. That, I was told, was a remnant of the time so long ago when Tibet was a pleasant land beside the sea. Certainly in that immense cave I saw strange remnants, skeletons of fantastic creatures which much, much later in my life I recognized to be mastodons, dinosaurs, and other exotic fauna.

Then in many places one would find great slabs of natural crystal, and in the natural crystal one could see kelp different types of seaweed, and occasionally a perfectly preserved fish completely embedded in clear crystal. These were indeed regarded as sacred objects, as messages from the past.

Kite flying was an art at which I excelled. Once a year we went into the high mountains to gather rare herbs and to generally have recreation from the quite arduous life of a lamasery. Some of us—the more foolhardy of us—flew in man-lifting kites, and I thought first that here was that which had been described in the prophecy, but then I came to my senses and realized it could not be a man-lifting kite because these kites were connected to the Earth by ropes, and should a rope be broken or escape from the clutches of the many monks then the kite would fall and there would be the death of the person riding it.

There were quite a number of interviews with the In- most One, our Thirteenth Dalai Lama, and I felt such love and respect for him. He knew that in a few more years Tibet would be an enslaved state, but “the Gods had foretold” and the Gods must be obeyed. There could be no real form of resistance because there were no real weapons in Tibet. You cannot oppose a man with a rifle when all you have is a Prayer Wheel or a string of beads.

I received my instructions, my sacred orders, from the Great Thirteenth. I received guidance and advice, and the love and understanding which my own parents had completely denied me, and I decided that come what may I would do my best.

There had been times when I had seen my Father. Each time he had turned away from me frozen-faced as if I was the lowest of the low, beneath his contempt. Once, almost at the end of my stay in the Potala, I had visited my parents at home. Mother sick-

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ened me by her excess formality, by the manner in which she treated me purely as a visiting lama. Father, true to his belief, would not receive me and shut himself in his study. Yasodhara, my sister, looked at me as if I was some freak or figment from a particularly bad nightmare.

Eventually I was summoned again to the Inmost One's apartments and told much that I do not propose to repeat here. One thing he did tell me was that on the very next week I would go to China to study as a medical student at the University of Chungking. But, I was instructed, I must take a different name, I could not use my own name of Rampa or certain elements of a Chinese rebellion would seize me and use me as a bargaining tool. There was in existence in China at that time a faction devoted to the overthrow of the government and who were prepared to adopt any methods whatever to achieve their objective.

So—I was told to pick a name. Now, how could a poor Tibetan boy, one just approaching manhood, admittedly, but how could he pick a Chinese name when he didn't know anything about China? I pondered on that awful question, and then unbidden, unexpectedly, a name appeared in my mind. I would call myself Kuon Suo which in one dialect of China meant priest of the hill. Surely that was an appropriate name. But it was a name which people found difficult to pronounce— Western people, that is—and so it soon became shortened to Ku'an.

Well, the name was settled. My papers were in order. I was given special papers from the Potala testifying to my status and to the standards I had reached because, as I was told and as I found to be absolutely correct later, Western people would not believe anything unless it was “on paper,” or could be felt or torn to pieces. So my papers were prepared and handed to me with great ceremony.

Soon came the day when I had to ride all the way to Chungking. My Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, and I had a most sad farewell. He knew I would not see him again while he was in the body. He gave me many assurances that I would meet him often in the astral.

I had a party of people going with me to protect me from Chinese brigands and to be able to report my safe arrival at Chungking. We started off and rode steadily all along through the Highlands of the Plain of Lhasa, and then we descended to the Lowlands, a place which was almost tropical in the exotic flora-wonderful rhododendrons. We passed many lamaseries, and quite frequently we spent the night in them if they happened to be on our path at a suitable time. I was a lama, actually I was an abbot, and a Recognized Incarnation, thus when we went to a lamasery we were indeed given special treatment. But I did not welcome such special treatment because each time it reminded me of the hardships of my life yet to be endured.

Eventually we left the borders of Tibet and entered China. Here, in China, every large village seemed to be infested with Russian Communists-white men who were standing up usually on an ox cart telling the workers of the wonders of Communism and how they should rise and massacre those who were landowners, telling them how China belonged to the people. Well, now apparently it does, and what a mess they have made of it!

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The days passed, and our seemingly endless journey became shorter. It was quite annoying to be accosted by certain of the Chinese peasants who gaped at me because I looked somewhat like a Westerner. I had grey eyes instead of brown, and my hair was very dark but still not shiny black, so the story went about that I was a Russian in disguise! Nowadays, since my life in the West, I have had all manner of strange tales told about me; one tale which amused me immensely was to the effect that I was really a German who had been sent to Lhasa by Hitler so that I could learn all the secrets of the occult and then I would come back to Berlin and win the war for Hitler by magical means. Well, in those days I didn't even know there was such a man as Hitler. It is a most remarkable thing how a Westerner will believe everything except that which is utterly true; the more true a matter the more difficult the Westerner finds it to believe. But while on the subject of Hitler and Tibetans, it is a fact that a small group of Tibetans were captured by the Nazis during the war and were compelled to go to Berlin, but they certainly did nothing to help him win the war, as history proves.

At last we turned a corner in the road, and then we came in sight of the old city of Chungking. This city was built on high cliffs and far down below the river flowed. One of the rivers was particularly familiar to me, and that was the Chialing. So the high city of Chungking with its stepped streets with many a cobble was washed at its base by two rivers, the Yangtse and the Chialing. Where the two met a fresh branch was formed, and so the city appeared from afar to be an island.

Seven hundred and eighty steps we climbed up to the city itself. We gazed like yokels at the shops and what to us seemed to be brilliantly lit stores containing articles which were completely beyond our understanding. Things in windows glittered, from many stores came noises, foreigners speaking to each other out of boxes, and then there came blasts of music out of other boxes. It was all a complete marvel to us, and I, knowing that I would have to spend a long time in such surroundings, began almost to quake with fear at the thought.

My retinue were embarrassing me by the manner in which they gaped. Each of the men was shaking with nervousness, and each of them had his mouth open and eyes wide open too. I thought we must look a sorry bunch of country bumpkins gazing like this. But then I thought we weren't here for that, after all. I had to register at the University and so we made our way there. My companions waited in the grounds outside while I entered and made my formal appearance, producing the envelope which I had so carefully safeguarded all the way from Lhasa.

I worked hard in the University. My form of education had been quite different from that which was demanded by the University system and so I had to work at least twice as hard. The Principal of the University had warned me that conditions would be difficult. He said that he had been qualified in the latest American systems and with his very capable staff he was bringing a mixture of Chinese and American medicine and surgery to the students.

The academic work was hard because I knew nothing of Electricity, but I soon learned! Anatomy was easy; I had studied that quite thoroughly with the Disposers of the

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Dead in Lhasa, and it amused me greatly when first we were ushered into the dissecting rooms where dead bodies lay about to find so many of the students turn a pale green and become violently sick, while others just fainted away on the floor. It was such a simple matter to realize that these dead bodies would not feel anything by our amateurish efforts upon them, they were just like a suit of old clothes which had been discarded and which would be cut up perhaps to make other garments. No, the academic matter was difficult at first, but eventually I was able to take my place quite near the top of the class.

At about this time I noticed that there was a very very old Buddhist priest who was giving lectures at the University, and I made some inquiries and was told, "Oh, you don't want to bother about him, he's just an old crackpot, he's weird!" Well, that persuaded me that I would have to do extra work and attend the "old crackpot's" lectures. It was well worthwhile.

I formally requested permission to attend and was gladly accepted. A few lectures later we were all sitting down and our lecturer entered. As was the custom we rose and remained standing until he told us to be seated. Then he said, "there is no death." No death, I thought, oh, there is going to be a lecture on the occult, he is going to call death "transition" which, after all, is what it is. But the old lecturer let us stew in our own impatience for a time, and then he chuckled and went on, "I mean that literally. If we only knew how we could prolong life indefinitely. Let us look at the process of aging, and then I hope you will see what I mean."

He said, "A child is born and follows a certain pattern of growth. At a varying age, it varies according to each person, real development is stated to have stopped, real worthwhile growth has stopped, and from then on there is what is known as the degeneration of old age where we get a tall man becoming shorter as his bones shrink". He looked about to see if we were following, and when he saw my particular interest he nodded and smiled most amiably.

He continued:—

"A person has to be rebuilt cell by cell so that if we get a cut, part of the brain has to remember the pattern of the flesh before the cut, and then must supply identical, or near-identical, cells to repair the defect. Now, every time we move we cause cells to wear out, and all those cells have to be rebuilt, replaced. Without an exact memory we should not be able to rebuild the body as it was."

He looked about again, then pursed his lips, and said, "If the body, or rather, if the brain forgets the precise pattern then the cells may grow wild, they grow according to no previous pattern and thus those wild cells are called cancer cells. It means that they are cells which have escaped from the control of that part of the brain which should regulate their precise pattern. Thus it is, you get a person with great growths on his body. That is caused by cells growing in haphazard fashion and which have escaped from the brain's control."

He stopped to take a sip of water, and then continued, "Like most of us the growth and replacing centre of the brain has a faulty memory. After reproducing cells for a few

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thousand times it forgets the precise pattern and with each succeeding growth of cells there is a difference so eventually we have that which we call aging. Now, if we could remind the brain constantly of the exact shape and size of each cell to be replaced then the body would always appear to be of the same age, always appear to be the same condition. In short, we would have immortality, immortality except in the case of total destruction of the body or damage to the cells."

I thought of this, and then it came to me in a flash that my Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, had told me the same thing in somewhat different words and I had been too young, or too stupid, or both, to understand what he really meant.

Our lectures were interesting. We studied so many subjects not studied in the West. In addition to ordinary Western type of medicine and surgery we studied acupuncture and herbal remedies, but it wasn't all work and no play, although nearly so.

One day when I was out with a friend we wandered down to the shore of the rivers and there we saw an aeroplane which had been parked and just left for some reason. The engine was ticking over and the propeller was just revolving. I thought of the kites I had flown, and I said to my friend, "I bet I could fly that thing." He roared with derision, and so I said, "All right, I'll show you." I looked around to see there was no one about and I got in that contraption and, to my own surprise and to the surprise of many watchers, I did fly the thing but not in the manner prescribed, my aerobatics were quite involuntary and I survived and landed safely only because I had keener reflexes than most.

I was so fascinated with that highly dangerous flight that I learned to fly—officially. And because I showed more than average promise as an airman I was offered a commission in the Chinese forces. By Western standards the style and rank granted to me was Surgeon-Captain.

After I had graduated as a pilot the commanding officer told me to continue my studies until I had graduated also as a physician and surgeon. That was soon done, and at last, armed with quite a lot of official looking papers, I was ready to leave Chungking. But there came a very sad message concerning my Patron, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, the Inmost One, and so, obeying a summons, I returned to Lhasa for a very brief time.

Destiny called, however, and I had to follow the dictates of those in authority above me and so I retraced my steps on to Chungking and then on to Shanghai. For a time I was on the reserve as an officer of the Chinese forces. The Chinese were having a most difficult time because the Japanese were trying to find an excuse to invade China. All manner of indignities were being heaped upon foreigners in the hope that the foreigners would make trouble for the government of China. Men and women were being stripped naked in public and given a body search by Japanese soldiers who said they were suspecting the foreigners of taking messages. I saw one young woman who resisted; she was stripped naked and made to stand for hours in the centre of a busy street. She was truly hysterical, but every time she tried to run away one of the sentries would prod her obscenely with a bayonet.

The Chinese people watching could do nothing, they did not want an interna-

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tional incident. But then one old Chinese woman threw a coat to the young woman so that she could cover herself; a sentry jumped at her and with one slash cut off the arm that had thrown the coat.

It amazes me now, after all I have seen after all I have suffered, that people the world over seem to be rushing to the Japanese offering them friendship, etcetera, presumably because they offer in return cheap labor. The Japanese are a blight upon the Earth because of their insane lust to dominate.

In Shanghai I had my own private practice as a doctor, and a quite successful one too. Perhaps if the Japanese war had not started I should have made my living in Shanghai, but on the 7th July, 1937, there was an incident at the Marco Polo Bridge, that incident really started the war. I was called up and sent to Shanghai docks to supervise the assembling of a very large three-engine aeroplane which had been stored there ready for collection by a firm which had proposed to start a passenger airline.

With a friend I went to the docks and we found the aeroplane in pieces, the fuselage and the wings all separate. The undercarriage was not even connected, and the three engines were separately crated. By dint of much psychometry and even more attempts at the use of common sense I managed to direct workers to assemble the aircraft on a very large open space. As far as I could I checked everything over, I examined the engines, made sure they had the right fuel and the right oil. One by one I started those engines and tried them out, let them idle and let them roar, and when I was satisfied after many adjustments that they would keep going, I taxied that three-engine plane up and down that large tract of land so that I would get used to the feel of the thing because one doesn't stunt too long in a three-engine plane!

At last I was satisfied that I understood the controls and could handle them quite well. Then with a friend who had a tremendous amount of faith in me, we got into the plane and taxied to the extreme edge of the wide open space. I had coolies put large chocks in front of the wheels with instructions to pull on the ropes to move the chocks immediately I raised my right hand. Then I opened all three throttles so the plane roared and shook. At last I raised my hand, the chocks were pulled out and we cavorted madly across the ground. At the last moment I pulled back on the control and we went up at what I believe was a truly unorthodox angle, but we were flying, and we flew around for an hour or two to get the feel of the thing.

Eventually we came back to the landing space and I was careful to note the direction of smoke. I came in slowly and landed into the wind, and I confess that I was bathed in perspiration; my friend was, too, in spite of all his faith in me!

Later I was told to remove the plane to another area where it could be guarded day and night because the international brigade was becoming very active, and some of these foreigners thought they could do just what they liked with the property of the Chinese. We did not want our big aeroplane damaged.

At a secluded base the plane was altered. Much of the seating was removed and stretchers were put in on racks. At one end of the plane there was a metal table fitted and

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this was going to be an operating theatre. We were going to do emergency operations because now—at the end of 1938—the enemy were approaching the outskirts of Shanghai, and I had instructions to close my practice which I had still been carrying on part-time. I was told to take the plane to a safe area while it could be repainted all white and with a red cross. It also was to have “Ambulance Plane” painted on it in Chinese and Japanese characters.

But when painted the paint was not destined to last very long. Bombs were dropping over Shanghai, the air was full of the acrid stench of explosives, full of particles of grit which stung the nostrils, irritated the eyes—and scoured the paint from Old Abie, as we called our aeroplane. Soon there came a greater “crump” and Abie jumped into the air and collapsed flat on the underside of the fuselage, a near bomb burst had blown off the undercarriage. With immense labor and considerable ingenuity we repaired the undercarriage with lengths of split bamboo, like putting splints on a broken limb, I thought. But with the bamboo lashed firmly in place I taxied up and down the bomb-pitted ground to see how the ship would manage; it certainly seemed to be all right.

We were sitting in the plane when there was a great commotion and an irate Chinese general—full of pomp and self-assurance—came on to our airfield surrounded by subservient members of his staff. Brusquely he ordered us to fly him to a certain destination: He would not take our statement that the plane really was not fit to fly until further repairs had been carried out. He would not accept our statement that we were an ambulance plane and were not permitted by international law to carry armed men. We argued, but his argument was stronger; he just had to say, “take these men and shoot them for failing to obey military orders,” and that would have been the end of us. We would have gone flying off without him!

The troop of men climbed into the plane tossing out medical equipment—just scattering it out of the open door—to make room for their own comforts. Out went our stretchers, out went our operating table, our instruments, everything. They were just tossed away as if they were garbage and would never be wanted again. As it happened they weren't.

We took off and headed toward our destination, but when some two hours away from our point of departure Red Devils came out of the Sun, Japanese fighter planes, hordes of them like a load of mosquitoes. The hated red symbol glowed brightly from the wings. They circled our ambulance plane with the red crosses so prominently displayed, and then quite callously they took turns to pump bullets in us. Since that time I have never liked the Japanese, but I was to have more fuel for the flame of my dislike in days to come.

We were shot down and I was the only one left alive. I fell into about the most insalubrious place in China—a sewage ditch where all the waste matter was collected. And so I fell into the sewage ditch and went all the way to the bottom, and in that incident I broke both ankles.

Japanese soldiers arrived and I was dragged off to their headquarters and very, very badly treated indeed because I refused to give them any information except that I

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was an officer of the Chinese services. It seemed to annoy them considerably because they kicked out my teeth, pulled off all my nails, and did other unpleasant things from which I still suffer. For instance, I had hoses inserted in my body and into the water supply was put mustard and pepper, then the taps were turned on and my body swelled enormously and tremendous damage was caused inside. That is one of the reasons I suffer so much even now, all these years later.

But there is no point in going into detail because an interested person can read it all in "Doctor from Lhasa. I wish more people would read that book to let them see what (well, YOU know what) sort of people the Japanese are.

But I was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp for women because this was considered to be degrading. Some of the women had been captured from places like Hong Kong. Some of them were in truly shocking condition because of continual rapes.

It is worth mentioning that at this time there were certain German officers who were "advising" the Japanese, and these officers were always provided with the best looking of the women, and the perversions—well, I have never seen anything like it. It does seem that the Germans excel not merely at making war but at other things as well.

After a time, when my ankles had healed and my nails had regrown, I managed to make an escape, and I made my slow painful way back to Chungking. This was not yet in the hands of the Japanese and my medical colleagues there did wonders in restoring my health. My nose had been broken. Before being broken it had been—according to Western standards—somewhat squat, but now through the exigencies of surgery my nose became quite a large affair which would have done credit to any Westerner.

But war came to Chungking, the violent war of Japanese occupation. Once again I was captured and tortured, and eventually I was again put in charge of a prison camp where I did the best I could for patients among the prisoners. Unfortunately a senior officer was transferred from another area, and he recognized me as an escaped prisoner.

All the trouble started again. I had both legs broken in two places to teach me not to escape. Then they put me on a rack and pulled my arms and legs very tight indeed. In addition, I had such a blow across the lower spinal region that grave complications were caused which even now are making my spine degenerate, so much so that I can no longer stand upright.

Once again, after my wounds healed, I managed to escape. Being in an area where I was well-known I made my way to the home of certain missionaries who were full of "tut tuts" and great exclamations of sorrow, compassion—the works. They treated my wounds, gave me a narcotic—and sent for the Japanese prison guards because, as they said, they wanted to protect their own mission and I was not "one of them."

Back in the prison camp I was so badly treated that it was feared that I should not survive, and they wanted me to survive because they were sure I had information they needed, information which I refused to give.

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At last it was decided that I escaped far too easily, and so I was sent to the mainland of Japan to a village near the sea, near a city called Hiroshima. I was again put in charge—as medical officer—of a prison camp for women, women who had been brought from Hong Kong, Shanghai, and other cities, and who were being kept there with some dim view on the part of the Japanese that they could be used as hostages when bargaining later because the war was going very badly for the Japanese now, and the leaders knew full well that they had no hope of winning.

One day there was the sound of aircraft engines, and then the ground shook and an immense pillar appeared in the distance, a pillar the shape of a mushroom with rolling clouds spreading high into the sky. About us there was utter panic, the guards scattered like scared rats, and I, ever alert for such an opportunity, vaulted over a fence and made my way down to the waters edge. A fishing boat was there—empty. I managed to climb aboard and with a pole just had enough strength left to push the boat into deeper water. Then I collapsed into the stinking bilge. The boat swept out to sea on the tide which was receding, but I—up to my neck in water in the bottom of the boat—knew nothing about it until at last I dizzily awakened and it came back to me with a start that once again I had escaped.

Painfully I dragged myself up a bit higher out of the water and looked anxiously about. The Japanese, I thought, would be sending out speedboats to capture a many-time runaway. But no, there were no boats at all in sight, but on the skyline over the city of Hiroshima there was a dull, evil red, glow and the sky was black, and from that blackness there dropped “things”, blood-red splotches, sooty masses, black greasy rain.

I was aching with hunger. I looked about and found a locker in the side of the bulkhead toward the bows, and in that locker there were pieces of stale fish which presumably were meant to be used as bait. They were sufficient to maintain a certain amount of life in me, and I was most grateful to the fisherman who had left them there.

I lay back across the seats of the boat and felt great unease because the boat was rocking in a most strange manner, the sea itself seemed strange, there were waves of a type I had not seen before almost as if there was an underwater earthquake.

I looked about me and the impression was eerie. There was no sign of life. Normally on such a day there would have been innumerable fishing boats about because fish was the staple food of the Japanese. I felt a great sense of unease because being telepathic and clairvoyant I was obtaining remarkable impressions, so confused and so many that I just could not understand them.

All the world seemed to be quiet except for a strange sighing of the wind. Then high above me I saw a plane, a very large plane. It was circling about and through being observant I could see the large lens of an aerial camera pointing down. Obviously photographs were being taken of the area for some reason which I then did not know.

Soon the plane turned about and went off beyond the range of my vision, and I was alone again. There were no birds in sight; strange, I thought, because sea birds always came to fishing boats. But there were no other boats about either, there was no

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sign of life anywhere, and I had these peculiar impressions coming to my extra-senses. At last I suppose I fainted because everything suddenly went black. The boat with my unconscious form drifted on into the Unknown.

CHAPTER SIX

After what seemed endless days, and actually I had no idea how long it was, but after this indeterminate period I suddenly heard harsh foreign voices and I was lifted by arms and legs and swung in an arc and let go. I landed with a splash just at the edge of the water and opened bleary eyes to find that I had reached some unknown shore.

Before me I saw two men pushing frantically on the boat, and then at the last moment jumping aboard. Then sleep, or coma, claimed me again. My sensations were rather peculiar because I suddenly had the impression of swaying, and then a cessation of motion. After—I was told later—five days I returned to the Land of the Living and found myself in a spotlessly clean hovel which was the home of a Buddhist priest. I had been expected, he told me haltingly, for our languages were similar yet not the same and we found difficulty in making ourselves understood.

The priest was an old man and he had had dreams (he called them dreams, anyway) that he had to stay and render assistance to a “great one who would come from afar.” He was near death through starvation and age. His brownish-yellow face looked almost transparent he was so undernourished, but from somewhere food was obtained and over several days my strength was built up. At last, when I was thinking that I must be making my way on through life's path, I awakened in the morning to find the old monk sitting beside me cross-legged—and dead. He was stone cold, so he must have died in the early part of the night.

I called in some of the people from the small hamlet in which the hovel was and we dug a grave for him, and gave him a decent burial complete with Buddhist ceremonial. With that task done I took what scant supply of food was left and set out on my way.

Walking was awful. I must have been far weaker than I had imagined because I found myself left sick and dizzy. But there was no turning back. I did not know what was happening, I did not know who was an enemy or who was a friend, not that I had had many friends in my life. So I pressed on.

After what seemed to be endless miles I came to a frontier crossing. Armed men were lounging about near a frontier station, and I recognized their uniforms from pictures I had seen; they were Russians, so now I could place my location, I was on the road to Vladivostok, one of the great Russian seaports of the far East.

At the sight of me the frontier guards set great mastiffs they loose and they came snarling and slaving at me, but then, to the amazement of the guards, they jumped at me with affection because they and I recognized each other as friends. Those dogs had never been talked to telepathically before and I suppose they thought I was one of them.

Anyway, they jumped all around me and welcomed me with wild yelps and barks

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of joy. The guards were most impressed, they thought I must have been one of them and they took me into their guard room where they gave me food. I told them that I had escaped from the Japanese, so, as they were at war with the Japanese as well, I automatically became “on their side.”

Next day I was offered a ride to Vladivostok so that I could look after the dogs who were being taken back to the city because they were too fierce for the guards. Gladly I accepted the offer and the dogs and I rode in the back of a truck. After a rather bumpy ride we arrived at Vladivostok.

Again I was on my own, but as I was turning away from the guard room in Vladivostok a tremendous noise of screams, howls, and snarling barks rent the air. Some of the dogs in the large compound had suddenly been afflicted with blood-lust and were attacking guards who were trying to control them. A Captain came and after hearing what his frontier men had told him he ordered me to control the dogs. By good fortune I managed to do just that, and by telepathy I got the dogs to understand that I was their friend and they would have to behave themselves.

I was kept in that camp for a month while the dogs were being retrained, and when the month was over I was permitted to go on my way again. My task now was to satisfy that terrible urge I had of moving on, moving on. For a few days I hung about Vladivostok wondering how to reach the main city, Moscow. At last I learned about the Trans-Siberian railway, but one of the dangers here was that many escapees wanted to get to Moscow and for quite a distance by the sidings there were pits in which guards lay in wait so they could see beneath the trains and shoot off anyone clinging to the rods.

At last one of the men from the Vladivostok border patrol with whom I had been for the last month showed me how to circumvent the guards, and so it was that I went to Voroshilov where there were no checks on the railway. I took food with me in a shoulder bag and lay in wait for a suitable train. Eventually I managed to get aboard and I lay beneath, between the wheels, actually I tied myself to the bottom side of the railroad car floor so that I was quite high up above the axles and hidden by the grease boxes. The train started and for about six miles I endured being held by ropes until I decided it was safe to climb aboard one of the railroad cars. It was dark, very dark, the Moon had not risen. With extreme effort I managed to slide open one of the railroad car doors and painfully climb inside.

Some four weeks after, the train came to Noginsk, a small place about forty miles from Moscow. Here, I thought, was the best place to get off, so I waited until the train slowed for a bend and then I dropped safely to the frozen ground.

I walked on and on, and it was a disturbing sight indeed to see corpses beside the road, the corpses of people who had died from starvation. An elderly man, tottering in front of me, dropped to the ground. Instinctively I was about to stoop and see what I could do for him when a whispered voice came, “Stop Comrade, if you bend over him the police will think you are a looter and will shoot you. Keep on!”

In time I reached the centre of Moscow, and was gazing up at the Lenin Monument

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when suddenly I was felled to the ground by, I found, a blow from a rifle butt. Soviet guards were standing over me just kicking me and repeatedly kicking me to get me to rise to my feet. They questioned me, but they had such a “big city” accent that I was completely unable to follow what they were talking about, and at last, with two men guarding me, one at each side, and a third man with a huge revolver poking into my spine, I was marched off. We reached a dismal building, and I was just shoved into a small room. Here I was interrogated with considerable roughness, and I gathered that there was a spy scare in Moscow and I was considered to be some sort of a spy trying to get into the Kremlin!

After some hours of being kept standing in a small closet the size of a broom cupboard, a car arrived and I was taken off to the Lubianka Prison. This is the worst prison in Russia, it is the prison of tortures, the prison of death, a prison where they have their own built-in crematorium so that all the evidence of a mutilated body could be burned.

At the entrance to Lubianka, or in a small vestibule, I had to remove my shoes and go barefooted. The guards with me put thick woolen socks over their boots and then I was marched in dead silence along a dim corridor, a corridor that seemed miles long. There was no sound.

A strange hiss sounded, and the guards pushed me in the back with my face against the wall. Something was put over my head so that no light could be seen. I sensed rather than felt someone passing me, and after some minutes the cloth over my head was roughly jerked away and I was pushed forward once more.

After what seemed to be an impossible time a door was opened in utter silence, and I was given a very violent push in the back. I stumbled forward and fell. There were three steps but in the pitch darkness of the cell I could not see them; so I fell and knocked myself unconscious.

Time passed with incredible slowness. At intervals there came screams ululating on the quivering air, and dying off with a gurgle. Some time later guards came to my cell. They gestured for me to go with them. I went to speak and was smashed across the cheeks, while another guard put a finger to his lips in the universal sign of “No talk!” I was led out along those endless corridors again, and eventually found myself in a brilliantly lit interrogation room. Here relays of questioners asked me the same questions time after time, and when I did not vary my story two guards were given special instructions; I was given an abbreviated tour of the Lubianka. I was taken along the corridors and I was shown torture rooms with poor unfortunate wretches undergoing the tortures of the damned, both men and women. I saw such tortures, such bestial performances, that I would not dare repeat them because, knowing Western people, I know that I would be disbelieved.

I was shown into a stone room which had what appeared to be stalls. From a blank wall stone stalls extended about three feet from the wall, and the guards showed me how a man or woman was pushed naked into a stall with hands upon the wall in front. Then the prisoner would be shot through the back of the neck and would fall forward, and all the blood would run into a drain and so no unnecessary mess was caused.

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The prisoners were naked because, according to Russian thought, there was no point in wasting clothing, clothing which could be used by the living.

From that place I was hurried out along another corridor and into a place which looked like a bake-house. I soon saw that it was not a bake-house because bodies and pieces of bodies were being cremated. As I arrived a very burned skeleton was being removed from a furnace and was then dumped into a great grinder which revolved and ground up the skeleton with a horrid crunching noise. The bone dust, I understood, was sent to farmers as fertilizer, as was the ashes.

But there was no point in keeping on about all the tortures that I underwent, but it will suffice to say that at long last I was dragged before three high officials. They had papers in their hands which, they said, testified to the fact that I had helped influential people in Vladivostok and another that I had helped his daughter escape from a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. I was not to be killed they told me but would be sent to Stryj, a city in Poland. Troops were going there from Russia and I would go with them as a prisoner and then in Stryj I would be deported from Poland also.

Eventually after a lot more delay because I was really too ill to be moved and so had to be given time to recover—eventually I was handed over to a Corporal who had two soldiers with him. I was marched through the streets of Moscow to the railway station. The weather was freezing cold, bitterly cold, but no food was offered although the three soldiers wandered off one at a time to get food.

A big detachment of Russian soldiers came into the station, and a sergeant came across saying that the orders had been changed and I was going to Lwow instead. I was loaded aboard the train which went off with many a shudder and jolt, and at long last we arrived at the city of Kiev.

Here I and some of the soldiers entered a troop carrier, to be accurate, forty soldiers and I were crammed into one. And then the troop carrier raced off, but our driver was too fast and too inexperienced, he caromed into a wall and the troop carrier exploded in fire from the broken fuel tank. For quite a time I was unconscious. When I did recover consciousness again I was being carried into a hospital. Here I was X-rayed, and it was found that I had three broken ribs, one broken end had perforated my left lung. My left arm was broken in two places, and my left leg was broken again at the knee and at the ankle. The broken end of a soldier's bayonet had penetrated my left shoulder, only just missing a vital place.

I awakened from an operation to find a fat woman doctor smacking my face to bring me back to consciousness. I saw that I was in a ward with forty or fifty other men. The pain I had was incredible, there was nothing to ease the pain, and for quite a time I hovered between life and death.

On the twenty-second day of my stay in the hospital two policemen came to the ward, ripped the blanket off my bed, and bawled at me: "Hurry up, you're being deported, you should have left three weeks ago!"

I was taken to Lwow and told that I would have to pay for my hospital treatment by

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working for a year repairing and rebuilding the roads of Poland. For a month I did that, sitting beside the road breaking stones, and then because my wounds were not properly healed I collapsed coughing blood, etcetera, and was taken off to a hospital again. Here the doctor told me that I would have to be moved out of the hospital as I was dying and he would get into trouble if any more prisoners died that month because he had “exceeded his quota.”

So it was that I was deported and, once again, became a wanderer. For the first of many times I was told that I had only a little while to live, but like many times since, I did not die.

Walking along a road I saw a car in distress, with a very frightened man standing beside it. Well, I knew quite a lot about cars and aircraft engines, so I stopped and found there was nothing much wrong with the car, nothing I couldn't put right, anyhow. So I managed to get it going and he was so extremely grateful that he offered me a job.

Now, that is not so strange as it may seem because that car had passed me some time ago, we had been crossing a river bridge together, crossing just where the border guards were stationed. He had been stopped a long time, and I suppose he had been watching the pedestrians and wondering what they were doing, where they were going—anything to pass away idle moments. I got over the border in very quick time — about the only time in my life that I have! But, he offered me a job and I could see by his aura that he was a reasonably honest man, as honest as he could afford to be, in other words. He told me that he needed to have cars taken to different locations, so I took his offer and it afforded me a truly wonderful opportunity of seeing Europe.

He knew the location quite well and he had “contacts.” He looked at my papers and shuddered at the sight of them, telling me that I couldn't possibly get anywhere except prison if I had papers marked “Deportee”. So he left me by the roadside for a time, after which he came back for me and drove me to a place—I will not say where—where I was fitted out with fresh papers, a forged passport, and all the necessary travel documents.

So I drove for him. He seemed to be scared of driving and it was fortunate for me that he was. I drove to Bratislava and on to Vienna; Vienna, I could see, had been a very wonderful city indeed but now it was knocked about a lot because of the aftermath of war. We stayed there two or three days, and I looked around the city as much as I could although it wasn't easy because the people were inordinately suspicious of foreigners. Every so often a person would sidle up to a policeman and there would be whispered conversation, and then the policeman would make sure his gun was in order and then he would approach me and demand, “Papers!” It gave me a good chance to check that my papers were quite “authentic” because there was never any query at all about them.

From Vienna we went to Klagenfurt. There was only a slight delay there, I waited about eight hours and got thoroughly frozen in the drizzling rain which came teeming down. I also got quite hungry because there was rationing and I hadn't got the right sort of coupons. But hunger was a thing to which I was well accustomed, so I just put up with it.

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We drove through the night to Italy and made our way to Venice. Here, to my regret, I had to stay ten days, unhappy ten days they were, too, because I am gifted or cursed with an absolutely exceptional sense of smell and, as possibly everyone knows, the canals of Venice are open sewers. After all, how can you have closed-in sewers when the whole darn place is flooded? So it certainly was not a place to swim!

The ten days dragged, the place seemed to be full of Americans who were very full of money and drink. It was an everyday sight for Americans to flash an immense roll of money which would have kept most of the Italians for a year. Many of the Americans, I was told, were deserters from the U.S. army or air force who had quite big businesses in black market goods.

From Venice we went on to Padua, a place rich in history and redolent of the past. I spent a week here, my employer seemed to have a great amount of business to do and I was dazzled by the different girl friends he picked up as other people pick flowers by the roadside. No doubt it was because he had such a big bank roll.

In Padua my employer had a sudden change of plans, but he came to me one day and told me all about it, saying he had to fly back to Czechoslovakia. But—there was an American, he said, who very much wanted to meet me, a man who knew all about me, so I was introduced to this man. He was a great beefy man with thick blubber lips, and a girl friend who did not seem to mind whether she was draped or undraped. The American was another man dealing in cars, trucks, and various other types of machinery. I drove a big truck for a time in Padua, my load was different official cars, some taken from high-ranking Nazis and others from Fascist officials who had lost life and cars. These cars—well, I just could not understand what was happening to them, but they seemed to be exported to the U.S.A. where they fetched fabulous prices.

My new employer, the American, wanted me to take a special car to Switzerland, and then take another car to Germany, but, as I explained, my papers were not good enough for that. He pooh-poohed my arguments, but then said, “Gee, I got the very thing for you, I know what we can do. Two days ago a drunken American drove into a concrete abutment and he was splattered all over the place. My men got his papers before they were even touched by the blood which came out of him; here they are.” He turned and rifled through his big bulging briefcase and fished out a bundle of papers. I jumped to instant alertness when I saw that they were the papers of a ship's Second-Engineer. Everything was there, the passport, the Marine Union card, work permits, money—everything. Only one thing was wrong; the photograph.

The American laughed as if he would never stop and said, “Photograph”? Come on with me, we'll get that done right away!” He hustled me out of the hotel room and we went to some peculiar place which meandered down many stone steps. There were secret knocks on the door and sort of password, and then we were admitted to a sleazy room with a gang of men lounging around there. I could see at a glance that they were counterfeiters although I couldn't tell what sort of money they were forging, but that was nothing to do with me. The problem was explained to them, and my photograph was speedily taken, my signature was taken as well, and then we were ushered out of the place.

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The following evening there came a knock on the hotel door and a man entered carrying my papers. I looked through them and I really could believe that I had signed the things and filled in all the details with my own handwriting, they were so perfect. I thought to myself, "Well, now I've got all the papers I should be able to get aboard a ship somewhere, get a job as an Engineer and go off to the U.S.A. That's where I have to be, the U.S.A., so I'll do what this fellow wants in the hope I'll get to some big seaport."

My new employer was delighted with my change of attitude so the first thing he did was to give me a large sum of money and introduce me to a Mercedes car, a very powerful car indeed, and I drove that car to Switzerland. I managed to get through Customs and Immigration, and there was no trouble at all. Then I changed the car at a special address and continued on to Germany, actually to Karlsruhe, where I was told that I had to go on to Ludwigshafen. I drove there, and to my surprise found my American employer there. He was delighted to see me because he had had a report from his contacts in Switzerland that the Mercedes had been delivered without a scratch on it.

I stayed in Germany for some three months, a little more than three months as a matter of fact. I drove different cars to different destinations, and frankly it simply did not make sense to me, I didn't know why I was driving these cars. But I had plenty of time to spare so I made good use of it by getting a lot of books to study marine engines and the duties of a ships Engineer. I went to Maritime Museums and saw ship models and models of ships' engines, so at the end of three months I felt quite confident that I could turn my engineering knowledge to marine engineering also.

One day my boss drove me out to a deserted airport. We drew up in front of a disused aircraft hangar. Men rushed to open the doors, and inside there was a truly weird contraption which seemed to be all yellow metal struts, the thing had eight wheels and at one end was a truly immense scoop. Perched at the other end was a little glassed-in house, the driving compartment. My employer said, "Can you take this thing to Verdun?" "I don't see why not," I replied. "It's got an engine and it's got wheels so it should be derivable." One of the mechanics there showed me how to start it and how to use it, and I practised driving up and down the disused aeroplane runways.

An officious policeman rushed into the grounds and announced that the thing could only be used at night and it would have to have a man at the rear end to watch out for coming traffic. So I practiced while a second man was found. Then, when I was satisfied that I knew how to make the machine move and, even more important, I knew how to make the thing stop, my lookout and I set off for Verdun. We could only drive by night because of German and French road regulations, and we could not exceed twenty miles an hour so it was a slow journey indeed. I had time to watch the scenery. I saw the gutted countryside, the burned-out wrecks of tanks and aircraft and guns, I saw the ruined houses, some with only one wall still remaining, "War," I thought, "what a strange thing it is that humans treat humans so. If people only obeyed our laws there would be no wars. Our law: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, a law which would effectively prevent wars."

But I saw some very pleasant scenery too, but I was not getting paid to admire the

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scenery, I was getting paid to get that clattering hunk of machinery safely to Verdun. At last we arrived at that city, and early in the morning before there was much traffic I drove it into an immense construction yard where we were expected. Here a very grim looking Frenchman who seemed to be more or less square rushed out at me, and said, "Now take this thing to Metz!"

I replied, "No, I have been paid to bring it here and I am driving it no further." To my horrified amazement he whipped out one of those awful knives which have a spring—you press a button and the blade slides out and locks in place. He came at me with that knife, but I had been well trained, I wasn't going to be stabbed by a Frenchman, so I did a little karate throw which sent him down on his back with one awful clatter, his knife spinning from his hand. For one awful moment he lay there dazed, then with a bellow of rage he jumped to his feet so fast that his feet were moving before they touched the ground, and he dashed into a workshop and came out with a three foot bar of steel used for opening crates. He rushed at me and tried to bring the bar down across my shoulders. I dropped to my knees and grabbed one of his legs, and twisted. I twisted a bit harder than I intended because his leg broke with quite a snap at the knee.

Well, I expected to get arrested by the police at least. Instead, I was roundly cheered by the man's employees, and then a police car drove up with the police looking very grim indeed. When they were told what had happened they joined in the applause, and to my profound astonishment they took me off for a good meal!

After the meal they found accommodation for me, and when I was in that accommodation a man came along and told me that he had heard all about me and did I want another job. Of course I did, so he took me out to a cafe in which there were too elderly ladies obviously waiting for me. They were very very old and very very autocratic, they did a bit of the "my man" talk until I told them that I wasn't their man, I didn't want anything to do with them in fact. And then one of them laughed outright and said she really did admire a man with spirit.

They wanted me to drive them in a very new car to Paris. Well, I was all for that, I wanted to go to Paris, so I agreed to drive them to Paris even though there was the stipulation that I must not exceed thirty-five miles an hour. That was no problem to me, I had just driven from Ludwigshafen at twenty miles an hour!

I got the two old ladies safely to Paris and they paid me very well for the trip, and gave me many compliments on my driving, actually they offered to take me in their service because they said they liked a man with spirit to be their chauffeur, but that was not at all what I wanted. My task had not yet been accomplished, and I did not think much of driving old ladies about at thirty-five miles an hour. So I refused their offer and left them to try to find another job.

People with whom I left the old ladies' car suggested accommodation for me, and I made my way there arriving just as an ambulance arrived. I stood outside waiting for the commotion to end and I asked a man what it was all about. He told me that a man who had an important job taking furniture to Caen had just fallen and broken his leg, and he was worried because he would lose his job if he could not go or find a substitute. As he

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was carried out on a stretcher I pressed forward and told him that I could do his job for him. The ambulance men halted a moment while we talked. I told him I wanted to go to that city, and if he could fix it he could get paid for the trip and I would go just to get that transport. He looked overjoyed in spite of the pain in his leg, and said that he would send a message to me from his hospital, and with that he was loaded into the ambulance and driven away.

I booked in at the lodging house, and later that night a friend of the furniture remover came and told me that the job was mine if I would go to Caen and help unload furniture and load a fresh lot. The man, he told me, had accepted my offer that he would have the money and I would have the work!

At the very next day, though, I had to be off again. We had to go to one of the big houses in Paris and load up this great pantehnicon. We did so—the gardener of the estate and I—because the driver was too lazy. He made excuse after excuse to leave. At last the pantehnicon was loaded and we departed. After we had done about a mile, or less, the driver stopped and said, “Here, you take on driving, I want to get some sleep.” We shifted positions, and I drove on through the night. In the morning we were at Caen and drove to the estate where the furniture and luggage had to be unloaded. Again one of the house staff and I unloaded because the driver said he had to go else where on business.

In the late afternoon when all the work was done the driver appeared and said; “Now we must go on and load a fresh lot.” I got into the driving seat and drove on as far as the main railroad station. There I jumped out, taking all my possessions with me, and said to the driver, “I’ve been working all the time, now you do some for a change!” With that I went into the station and got a ticket for Cherbourg.

Arrived at that city I wandered about a bit and eventually took a room at the Seamen's Lodgings in the dock area. I made quite a point of meeting as many ships Engineers as I could and making myself agreeable to them, so with a little prodding on my part I received opportunities to see their engine rooms aboard their ships, and I received many many hints and pointers which could not easily be obtained from text books.

Day after day I went to shipping agents showing “my” papers and trying to get a berth as second engineer on a ship going to the U.S.A. I told them that I had come to Europe on vacation and had been robbed of my money and now I had to work my way back. There were many expressions of sympathy, and at last a good old Scottish Engineer told me that he would offer me a job as third Engineer going that night to New York.

I went aboard the ship with him, and down the iron ladders to the engine room. There he asked me many questions about the operation of the engines and about the keeping of records and watches. Eventually he expressed himself as entirely satisfied and said, “Come on up to the Master's quarters, and you can sign the ship's articles.

We did that and the ship's Master looked a grim sort of fellow; I didn't like him at all, and he didn't like me either, but we signed the articles and then the ship's First Engineer told me: “Get your dunnage aboard, you take first duty, we sail tonight.” And that

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was that. And so, very probably for the first time in history a lama of Tibet, and a medical lama at that, posing as an American citizen, took a job aboard an American ship as Third Engineer.

For eight hours I stood engine room watch. The Second was off duty, and the First Engineer had work to do connected with leaving port, so I had to go immediately on duty without any opportunity to have a meal or even to change into uniform. But eight hours duty in port was a blessing to me. It enabled me to get accustomed to the place, to investigate the controls, and so instead of being displeased and unhappy about it as the Chief expected me to be, really I was well content.

After the eight hours was up the Chief Engineer clattered down the steel ladder and formally relieved me of duty, telling me to go and have a good meal because, he said, I looked famished. "And be sure," he commanded, "to tell the cook to bring down cocoa for me."

It was not a happy ship by any means. The Captain and the First Officer thought they were commanding a first-class liner instead of a beat-up old tramp steamer, they insisted on uniform, they insisted on inspecting One's cabin, an unusual thing aboard ship No, it was not a happy ship indeed, but we thudded along across the Atlantic, rolling and swaying in the North Atlantic weather. At last we reached the light-ship at the approach to New York harbor.

It was early morning and the towers of Manhattan seemed to be agleam with reflected light. I had never seen anything like this before. Approaching from the sea the towers stood up like something out of One's fevered imagination. We steamed on down the Hudson and under a great bridge. There I saw the world-famed Statue of Liberty, but to my astonishment Liberty had her back to New York, had her back to the U.S.A. This shocked me. Surely, I thought, unless America was going to take all and sundry then the liberty should be in the U.S.A.

We reached our berth after much shoving and towing by small tugs with a big "M" on the funnel. Then there was the roaring of motors, great trucks arrived, the cranes started to work as a shore crew came aboard. The Chief Engineer came and begged me to sign on, offering me promotion to Second Engineer. But no, I told him, I had had enough of that ship, some of the deck officers had indeed been an unpleasant lot.

We went to the shipping office and signed off, and the Chief Engineer give me a wonderful reference saying that I had shown great devotion to duty, that I was efficient in all branches of engine room work, and he made a special note that he invited me to sign on again with him at any time in any ship because, he wrote, I was a "great shipmate."

Feeling quite warmed by such a farewell from the Chief Engineer and carrying my heavy cases I went out of the docks. The din of traffic was terrible, there were shouting people and shouting policemen, and the whole place seemed to be absolutely mad. First I went to a ships hostel, or, more accurately it should be described as a Seamen's hostel. Here again there was no sign of hospitality, no sign of friendship, in fact with quite average politeness, I thought, I thanked the person for handing me the key to a room. He

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snarled back at me, "Don't thank me, I'm just doing my job, nothing more."

Twenty-four hours was the limit that one could stay in that hostel, forty-eight if one was going to join another ship. So the next day I picked up my cases again, went down in the elevator, paid off the surly reception clerk, and walked out into the streets.

I walked along the street being very circumspect because I was, frankly, quite terrified of the traffic. But then there was a terrific uproar, cars sounding their horns, and a policeman blowing his whistle, and at that moment a great shape mounted the sidewalk, hit me and knocked me down. I felt the breaking of bones. A car driven by a driver under the influence of drink had come down a one-way street, and as a last attempt to avoid hitting a delivery truck had mounted the sidewalk and knocked me over.

I awakened much later to find myself in a hospital. I had a broken left arm, four ribs broken, and both feet smashed. The police came and tried to find out as much as they could about the driver of the car—as if I had been his bosom friend! I asked them about my two cases and they said quite cheerily, "Oh no, as soon as you were knocked down, before the police could get to you, a guy slithered out of a doorway, grabbed your cases and went off at a run. We didn't have time to look after him, we'd got to get you off the sidewalk because you were obstructing the way."

Life in the hospital was complicated. Because of the rib injuries I contracted double-pneumonia and for nine weeks I lingered in that hospital making a very slow recovery indeed. The air of New York was not at all like that to which I was accustomed, and everyone kept all the windows closed and the heat turned on. I really thought I was going to die of suffocation.

At last I made enough recovery to get out of bed. After nine weeks in bed I was feeling dreadfully weak. Then some hospital official came along and wanted to know about payment! She said, "We found \$260 in your wallet and we shall have to take two hundred and fifty of that for your stay here. We have to leave you ten dollars by law, but you'll have to pay the rest." She presented me with a bill for over a thousand dollars.

I was quite shocked and complained to another man who had come in after her, a man who appeared to be some senior official. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Oh well, you'll have to sue the man who knocked you down. Its nothing to do with us." To me that was the epitome of foolishness because how could I trace the man when I hadn't seen him? As I said, I had more money in my cases, and the only reply was, "Well, catch the man and get your cases back from him." Catch the man—after nine weeks in hospital, and after the police apparently had failed to make any worthwhile attempt to catch him. I was quite shocked, but I was to be shocked even more. The man—the senior official—produced a paper and said, "You are being released from hospital now because you have no money for any further treatment. We can't afford to keep you foreigners here unless you can pay. Sign here!"

I looked at him in shock. Here was I, the first day out of bed for nine weeks, I had had broken bones and double-pneumonia, and now I was being turned out of hospital. There was no sympathy, no understanding, and instead I was literally—and I mean this

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quite literally—turned out of hospital, and all I had was a suit of clothes I was wearing and a ten dollar bill.

A man in the street to whom I explained my problem jerked a thumb in the direction of an employment agency, and so I went there and climbed up many stairs. At last I got a job with a very very famous hotel indeed, a hotel so famous that almost anyone in the world will have heard of it. The job—washing dishes. The pay—twenty dollars a week and one meal a day, and that one meal a day was not the good stuff that guests had, but the bad stuff left by guests or which was not considered fit for the guests. On twenty dollars a week I could not afford a room, so I did not bother about such things, I made my home wherever I happened to be, trying to sleep in a doorway, trying to sleep beneath a bridge or under an arch, with every so often the prod of a policeman's night stick in my ribs, and a snarling voice bidding me to get out of it and keep moving.

At last, by a stroke of luck, I obtained a job with a radio station. I became a radio announcer, talking to the whole world on the short waves. For six months I did that, and during that six months I obtained from Shanghai papers and belongings which I had left with friends there. The papers included a passport issued by the British authorities at the British Concession.

But, as I began to feel, I was wasting my time as a radio announcer, I had a task to do, and all I was earning now was a hundred and ten dollars a week which was a great advance over twenty dollars a week and one meal, but I decided to move on. I gave the radio station adequate time to obtain a suitable replacement for me, and when I had trained him for two weeks I left.

Fortunately I saw an advertisement wanting people to drive cars, so I answered the advertisement and found that I could take a car and drive it all the way to Seattle. There is no point in recounting the journey now, but I drove safely to Seattle and got a bonus for careful driving and for turning in the car without a single scratch on it. And then—I managed to go on to Canada.

So ends the second book, The First Era.

BOOK THREE

The Book of Changes.

“Let not thy sorrows obtrude on to those who have left this World of Man.”

“Name no names, for to name those who have passed beyond this realm is to disturb their peace.”

“Wherefore it is that those who are mourned suffer greatly from those who mourn.”

“Let there be Peace.”

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It also makes Good Sense, the Law of Libel being what it is!

Wherefore I say unto you— Names shall not be named.

PAX VOBISCUM.

CHAPTER SEVEN

There is little point in describing how I made my way through Canada, all the way through the Rocky Mountains, and all along to Winnipeg, to Thunder Bay, Montreal, and Quebec City. Thousands of people—tens of thousands of people—have done that. But I did have some unusual experiences which I may yet write about, although that is not for this moment.

In my journey through Canada it was borne upon me that I should make my way to England. I was convinced that the task which I still had to do had to start in England, a little place which I had seen only from afar from the porthole of a ship leaving Cherbourg and heading out into the English Channel before turning for the U.S.A.

In Quebec I made inquiries and managed to obtain all necessary papers such as passport, work permit, and all the rest. I also managed to obtain a Seaman's Union card. Again, there is no point in going into details of how I obtained these things. I have in the past told bureaucrats that their stupid system of red tape only strangles people who have all papers legitimately; in my own case I state emphatically that the only time I have had any difficulty at all entering a country was when my papers were in order.

Here in Canada, when I used to be more mobile and could go to the U.S.A., there was always difficulty with my papers; there was always something wrong, something for the Immigration officer to quibble about. So, bureaucrats are parasites who should be eliminated like lice. Hey! That would be a good idea, too, wouldn't it?

I made my way back to Montreal and there, with my papers perfectly in order I was able to get aboard a ship as a deckhand. The pay was not wonderful, but my own idea was that I wanted to get to England, and I had no money for a ticket, therefore any pay was better than having to pay.

The work was not too hard, it consisted merely of rearranging cargo and then knocking wedges into hold covers. Soon we were steaming up the English Channel, and not too long after we turned into the Solent on our way to Southampton. I was off duty at the time and was able to sit in the stern and look out across the English scenery which attracted me considerably, the English scenery seemed to me to be of the greenest of greens—at that time I had not seen Ireland which can beat the English scenery any time—and so I was quite entranced.

The Military Hospital at Netley intrigued me vastly. I thought from the water that it must be the home of a king or someone of such status, but a member of the crew with quite a loud laugh soon told me that this was just a hospital.

We went up past Woolston on the right, and Southampton on the left. I was inter-

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ested to see at Woolston the home of the Supermarine flying boats which were making very much of a name for themselves in the Far East.

Soon we docked in Southampton, and officials came aboard, checked the ship's papers and examined the crews' quarters. Finally we were given clearance to go ashore and I was on the point of leaving but was called back for Immigration check once again. The officer looked at my papers and was very friendly and approving when in answer to his question, "How long are you staying?" I replied, "I am going to live here, sir." He put the necessary stamps on the passport and gave me directions for Seamen's lodgings.

I walked out of the Immigration office and stood for a moment taking a last look at the old freighter on which I had arrived from the New World to the Old. A Customs officer started to move across with a smile on his face, and then suddenly there was a stunning blow at my back and I reeled against a wall, dropping my two cases as I did so.

Gathering my scattered wits I turned around and saw a man sitting at my feet. He was a senior Customs officer who had been hurrying to work and had misjudged his distance trying to get in the door. I went to help him up and he struck my outstretched hands with a fury of hatred. I recoiled in complete astonishment, the accident was not my fault, I was just standing there inoffensively. But I picked up my cases to move on when he yelled at me to stop. He called two guards to detain me. The Customs officer I had seen in the office hurried out and said, "Its quite all right, sir, quite all right. His papers are in order." The senior official seemed to go black in the face with fury, and no one could get a word in. On his orders I was taken to a room where my cases were opened and everything thrown on to the floor. He found nothing wrong here. So he demanded my passport and other papers. I gave them to him and he leafed through them and then snarled that I had a visa and a work permit and I didn't need both. With that he tore my passport across and threw it in the garbage bin.

Suddenly he stooped, picked up all the papers and crammed them in his pocket so that, I suppose, he could destroy them elsewhere.

He rang a bell and two men came from the outer office. "This man has no papers," said the senior officer, "he will have to be deported. . . ." "But," said the officer who had stamped my papers, "I saw them, I stamped them myself."

The senior turned to him enraged and said such things that made the poor man turn pale. And so eventually I was taken to a cell and left there.

The next day a simpering young idiot from the Foreign Office came, stroked his baby face and agreed with me that I must have had the necessary papers. But, he said, the Foreign Office could not have trouble with the Immigration Office so I would have to be sacrificed. The best thing I could do, he said, would be to agree that my papers had been lost overboard, otherwise I should be lodged in prison for quite a time and after the end of my sentence I should still be deported. Two years in prison was a thought that did not suit me at all. So I had to sign a paper saying that my passport had been lost at sea.

"Now," said the young man, "you will be deported to New York." This was too

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much for me because I had left from Montreal and Quebec, but the answer was quick; I had to go to New York because if I went to the Province of Quebec and told my story the press might get hold of it and make a commotion, because the press were always avid for anything sensational—not from a point of view of doing anyone any good but just because the press thrived—and thrive—on sensation and on trouble.

I was kept in a cell for a time, and then one day I was told I was to be deported the next day. In the morning I was led out of the cell and the senior officer was there beaming with joy that he, petty little bureaucrat that he was—had managed to subvert justice to his own wishes.

In the afternoon I was taken to the ship, and told that I would have to do work, and it would be the hardest work aboard ship, trimming coal in the bunkers of one of the oldest of old coal burners.

Then I was taken back to the cell because the ship was not yet ready to leave and the Captain could not accept me aboard until an hour before departure time. Twenty-four hours later I was taken to the ship and locked in a very small cabin where I was kept until the ship sailed beyond territorial limits.

After a time I was released from the cell, for that is what the small cabin was, and then given a battered shovel and rake and told to clean out the clinkers, etcetera. So I sailed back across the Atlantic, back toward New York, and as the first loom of land appeared in the morning the Captain sent for me and spoke to me alone. He told me that he agreed I had been unjustly treated. He told me that the police were coming aboard to arrest me and I would be sentenced for illegal entry into the U.S.A., and then after serving a sentence I would be deported to China.

He looked about him, and then went to a drawer in his desk saying, "A man like you can easily escape if you want to. The biggest difficulty is the handcuffs. Here is a key which will fit American handcuffs, I will turn away and you can take the key. As you can understand I cannot give you the key, but if you take it—well, I need know nothing about it."

So saying he turned, and I quickly pocketed the key. That Captain was a very decent man indeed. As the U.S. police came aboard checking their handcuffs he told them that I was not likely to cause any trouble, he told them that in his own opinion I had done nothing wrong and I was just being framed by an unpleasant immigration officer. The senior policeman laughed cynically and said that he quite agreed, every man was being framed by someone else, and with that he snapped the handcuffs on my wrists and gave me a rough punch toward the Jacob's ladder—the ladder by which pilots and policemen enter and leave ships still at sea.

With some difficulty I managed to get down the ladder although the police were expressing hopes that I would fall in and they would have to fish me out. Aboard the police launch I was roughly pushed down in the stern. Then the two policemen went about their job of filling in a report and turning their launch towards the shore.

I waited my chance until the wharves were near, and then when the police were

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not looking in my direction I just jumped over the side.

The water was dreadful. There was a thin, scum of oil and filth on the surface, filth which was the sewage of the ships and liners docked there, filth which had blown off the wharves, floating newspapers, floating boxes, bits of coke, all manner of strange pieces of wood just floating by. I dived deep and managed to get hold of the key and unlock the handcuffs which I let drop to the bottom of the harbor.

I had to come up for air, and as I broke surface there was a fuselage of shots quite close to me, so close that one of the bullets splattered water in my face. So, with a quick gulp of air, I sank down again and struck out not for the closest ward-pilings, but one rather more distant with the thought that the police would expect me to swim for the nearest.

Slowly I let myself rise to the surface until only my mouth and chin were above water. Then again I took a deep breath, and another, and another. No shots came my way, but I could just barely see the police launch cruising about in front of the nearer wharf.

Gently I let myself sink again and swam slowly—to conserve my air supply—to the wharf. There was a sudden bump, and instinctively my hands went out and clasped on that which I had bumped my head. It was a mess of half-sunken timbers which apparently had fallen from the partly ruined wharf above me. I clung to that with just my face out of the water. Slowly, as I could hear no sound, I sat up and in the distance I could see the police launch which had been joined by two others prowling about beneath the piles of the other wharf. On top of the wharf armed police were dashing around searching various buildings.

I kept still because suddenly a boat came along with three policemen in it. They were rowing silently. One of the policemen had a pair of binoculars and he was scrutinizing all the wharves in the area. Slowly I slid off the beam and let myself sink in the water so that only my nose and mouth were above the surface. Eventually I raised my head a bit and the boat was a long way away. As I looked I heard a shout, "Guess the guy's a stiff by now, we'll pick up his body later."

I lay again on the beam shivering uncontrollably in the coldness of wet clothing and the stiff breeze which blew across me.

When darkness was falling I managed to get on to the top of the wharf and darted for the shelter of a shed. A man was approaching and I saw he was a Lascar, and he looked quite friendly so I gave a low whistle. He strolled nonchalantly on and, quite without purpose it seemed, he edged toward my hiding place. Then he stooped to pick up some pieces of paper which were lying about. "Come out cautious like," he said, "a colored gentleman is waiting with a truck, he'll get you out of this."

Well, eventually I did get out of it, but I was in a sorry state indeed, I was suffering from exhaustion and from exposure. I got into the garbage truck, a tarpaulin stretched over me, and a whole load of garbage dumped on top!

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The colored man took me to his home and I was well looked after, but for two days and nights I slept the sleep of the totally exhausted.

During my exhaustion, while the physical body was repairing itself, I made an astral journey and saw my beloved Guide and friend, the Lama Mingyar Dondup. He said to me, "Your sufferings have truly been great, too great. Your sufferings have been the sour fruit of man's inhumanity to Man, but your body is getting worn out and soon you will have to undergo the ceremony of transmigration."

In the astral world I sat and my companion sat with me. I was told more.

"Your present body is in a state of collapse, the life of that body will not continue much longer. We feared that such conditions would prevail in the wild Western world that you would be impaired, and so we have been looking about for a body which you could take over and which in time would reproduce all your own features.

"We have determined that there is such a person. His body is on a very very low harmonic of your own, otherwise, of course, a change could not take place. The bodies must be compatible, and this person has a body which is compatible. We have approached him in the astral because we saw that he contemplated suicide. It is a young Englishman who is very very dissatisfied with life, he is not at all happy with life, and for some time he has been trying to decide on the most painless method of what he calls "self-destruction." He is perfectly willing to leave his body and journey here to the astral world provided he doesn't lose by it!

"We persuaded him a little time ago to change his name to that which you are now using, so there are a few more things to be settled and then—well, you will have to change bodies."

It was very, very necessary, I was instructed, that I should return to Tibet before I could undergo the necessary process of transmigration. Careful instructions were given to me and when I felt well enough I went to a shipping office and took passage to Bombay. Once again was subjected to all manner of harassment because my luggage consisted of just one case. But at last I got aboard the ship and when I was in my cabin two detectives came to visit me to find out why I had only one case. Assured that I had adequate luggage in India they smiled happily and went away.

It was most strange being a passenger aboard ship.

Everyone avoided me because I was a pariah who had only one case of luggage. The others, of course, seemed to have enough luggage to stock a whole store, but I—apparently the poorest of the poor—must be a fugitive from justice, or something, to travel as I did, and so I was avoided.

The ship went from New York all the way up along the coast of Africa and through the Straits of Gibraltar. Then we made another stop at Alexandria before entering the Suez Canal, and so on to the Red Sea. The Red Sea was terrible, the heat was murderous, and I almost got heat stroke. But finally we passed the coast of Ethiopia crossed the Arabian sea, and docked at Bombay. The noise and smell in Bombay was terrible, fantastic

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in fact, but I had a few friends, a Buddhist priest and a few influential people, and so my weeks stay in Bombay was made interesting.

After the week in which I tried to recover from all the shocks and strains I had had I was put on a train and crossed India to the city of Kalimpong. I managed to drop off the train before it actually entered Kalimpong because I had been warned that the place was absolutely thronged with Communist spies and newspaper men, and new arrivals were stopped and questioned by newspaper men and as I found to be true later—if one would not give an interview the newspaper men “invented” one without any regard whatever to the truth.

I knew Kalimpong slightly, certainly I knew enough to get in touch with some friends and so “went underground “ away from spies and away from newspaper men.

By now my health was deteriorating very rapidly, and there were serious fears that I would not live long enough to undergo the ceremony of transmigration. A lama who had been trained at Chakpori with me was in Kalimpong and he came to my assistance with very potent herbs.

I moved on in the company of this medical lama —and after ten weeks of hard travel we reached a lamasery overlooking the Valley of Lhasa. It was high and inaccessible, it was inconspicuous, and Communists would not bother about such a small insignificant place. Here again I rested, I rested for some seven days in all. On the morrow, I was told one day, I should journey into the astral and meet the astral body of the man whose physical vehicle I was going to take over.

For the present I rested, and mused upon the problems of transmigration. This person's body was not of much use to me because it was HIS body and had a lot of vibrations incompatible with my own. In time, I was told, the body would conform exactly to my own body when at that same age, and if Westerners find this a difficult matter to believe or understand, let me put it like this; the Western world knows about electroplating, and the Western world also knows about electrotyping. In the latter system an article can be immersed in a certain fluid and a special “connector” is applied opposite the article, and when current is turned on at the correct rate and amperage an exact duplicate of the original item is built up. This is known as electrotyping.

Again, it is possible to do electroplating. One can plate in a variety of metals, nickel, chromium, rhodium, copper, silver, gold, platinum, etcetera. One merely has to know how to do it. But the current flows from one pole to another through a liquid, and the molecules of one pole are transferred to the other pole. It is a simple enough system, but this is not a treatise on electroplating. Transmigration and the replacing molecule by molecule of the “fabric” of the host by that of the— what shall I say?— new occupant is very real, it has been done time after time by those who know how. Fortunately those who know how have always been people of reliable character, otherwise it would be a terrible thing indeed if one did just take over another person's body and do harm. I felt rather smug, foolishly so perhaps, when I thought that—well, I am going to do good, I don't want to take over anyone else's silly body, all I want is peace. But it seemed there was to be no peace in my life.

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In passing, and as one who has studied all religions, I must point out that Adepts did it for life after life. The Dalai Lama himself had done so, and the body of Jesus was taken over by the Spirit of the Son of God, and it had been common knowledge even in the Christian belief until it was banned because it made people too complacent.

From my high viewpoint in this remote isolated lamasery I could look out upon the distant city of Lhasa; quite a powerful telescope had somehow been smuggled out of the Potala and brought here, so one of my idle amusements was to use the telescope and look at the surly Chinese guards at the Pargo Kaling. I saw the troops rushing about in their jeeps, I saw through that telescope many unspeakable things done to men and to women, and I recalled with great horror that I had fought on the side of the Chinese as had many others, and now the Chinese were not behaving according to their promises, according to their avowed principles. All they thought of was violence.

It was hard to believe, looking out of the glassless window, that this was the same Tibet, the same Lhasa, that I had known before. Here the golden Sun still struck gleaming rays through ravines in the mountains, the silvery Moon still traversed the blackness of the night sky, and the distant pinpoints of colored light which were the stars still stabbed down through the roof of Heaven. Night birds did not call, though, as of yore because the Chinese Communists killed everything on sight. To my horror I found that they were extinguishing the life of those creatures I loved so much. Birds, they say, ate the grain which would cause humans to starve. Cats were killed, so no longer, so I was told, were there any cats left in Lhasa.

Dogs were killed and eaten by the Chinese. It seemed to be a Chinese delicacy. So not only poor humans were being subjected to death at the hands of the Chinese Communists, animals too, the pets of Gods, were being exterminated for no worthwhile reason. I was sick at heart at all the horrors being perpetrated on a harmless, innocent people. As I gazed out at the darkening sky I was overcome with emotion, overcome with sorrow, and then I thought, well I have this job to do, much evil has been forecast in my life. I hope I am strong enough to endure all that which has been foretold.

For some time I had been dimly aware of much excitement, of an air of expectancy, and my attention had been drawn again and again to Lhasa. The telescope was wonderful. But it was difficult looking out through a slit window with such a cumbersome article so I turned to a pair of twenty magnification binoculars which also had been brought and which offered greater maneuverability for views beyond the angle of the telescope in the window.

My attention was suddenly distracted from looking out for three men entered, two of them supporting the one between them. I turned and looked at him in horror; he was blind, his eyes had been gouged out leaving red pools. His nose was missing. The two men with him gently helped him to a sitting position, and in fascinated horror I recognized him as one that I had known before, as one who had helped me with my studies at Chakpori. The two attendants bowed and left. The lama and I were facing each other, and he spoke in a low voice: "My brother," he said to me, "I can well discern your thoughts. You wonder how I got in a condition like this. I will tell you. I was out about my lawful

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occasion and I happened to glance up toward Iron Mountain. A Chinese Communist officer suddenly turned from where he was sitting in his car and accused me of staring at him and thinking evil thoughts towards him. Naturally I denied the charge for such was not the truth, I was merely looking at our beloved home.

“But no, the officer said that all priests were liars and reactionists, and he gave abrupt orders to his men. I was seized and knocked down, and then a rope was put around my chest and knotted behind my back. The other end was tied to the rear of the car in which the officer sat. Then, with a whoop of joy, he drove off dragging me face down on the road.”

The old lama stopped and lifted his robe. I gasped with horror because all the skin and much of the flesh had been torn off from head to foot, shreds of flesh hung down, and the inside of his robe was just a bloody mess. He carefully lowered his robe again, and said, “Yes, the roughness of the road tore off my nose, it tore off other things too, and now I am waiting to pass over to the Land Beyond. But before I can have that release I have one more task to do.”

He paused for a moment or two, getting back some energy, and then said, “this matter of transmigration and the possibility that we might have to use it has been known for many years, and I was in charge of the project, I had to study the ancient manuscripts to find out as much as I could about it. I had to consult the Akashic Records and I had to amass as much knowledge as I could.” He paused again, but then went on, “the Chinese eventually released me from my bonds but the officer had one more evil deed to do. He kicked me as I lay on my back in the dirt and said, “You stared at me and you wished me evil, for that you shall stare no more.” One of his men picked up a sharp narrow flint from the roadway and stuck it in my eyeballs, one after the other, and just flipped my eyeballs out so that they dangled on my cheeks. Then with a laugh they went away and left me as I was, with my nose ripped off, my body ripped and torn, no longer would one be able to say if I was a man or a woman because such parts had been torn off, and on my cheeks rested my blinded eyes with the orbs perforated and the fluid spilling out and running down to my ears.

“When they were able to, shocked people came to my aid and I was lifted up and carried into a house. I fainted, and when I recovered consciousness I found that my eyes had been removed and I had been well treated with herbal packs. Stealthily by night I was carried up into the mountains to await your coming, now I have to tell you much, and to accompany you into a journey into the astral from which I shall not return.”

He rested yet awhile that he might regain a little of his strength, and then when a slight color was returning to his cheeks he said, “We must go into the astral.”

So we went the familiar route again. Each of us was sitting in the lotus position, that position which we of the East find the easiest to maintain. We said our suitable mantras with which our vibrations were so heightened that with the almost imperceptible jerk which accompanies such transition we departed from our bodies, I temporarily and my companion permanently.

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The greyness of Earth and the white of the eternal snows departed from our sight. Before us there appeared a veil, a veil which shimmered bluish-white, a veil which as one first approached it appeared to be an impenetrable barrier, but those who knew how could enter without hindrance. This we did, and found ourselves in an area of glorious light with impressions of joy.

At that point of the astral world which we entered we were upon a green sward, the grass was short and springy beneath our feet. "Ah!" breathed the lama with me, "How wonderful to see again, how wonderful to be without pain. Soon my task will be finished then I shall be Home for a time at least." So saying he led me along a pleasant path.

There were trees about, many many trees, all in green and red and yellow leaf. To the side of us there swept a majestic river, mirroring in its watery surface the deep blue of the sky above. Faint fleecy clouds drifted lazily across the sky and there was an atmosphere of bubbling life, of vitality, of health, of happiness.

In the trees birds sang, birds of a type which I had not seen on Earth for these were glorious creatures indeed, birds of many different colors, birds of many different plumage.

The old man and I walked on among the trees, and then we came to an open space which was indeed a garden, a garden of brilliant flowers, none of a type that could be recognized by me. The flowers seemed to nod toward us as if greeting us. In the distance I could see people wandering about as if they were luxuriating in this glorious garden. Every so often a person would bend and sniff a flower. At times others would reach up skywards, and a bird would come and land on his outstretched hand. There was no fear here, only peace and contentment.

We walked on a while, and then before us we saw what seemed to be an immense temple. It had a cupola of shining gold and the walls which supported it were of a light fawn color. Other buildings stretched away from it, each in a pastel shade, all in harmony, but at the entrance to the temple a group of people were waiting. Some of them wore the robes of Tibet, and another—I could not understand what he was wearing for the moment, it looked as if he was wearing black or something very dark. And then I saw as we approached that it was a man of the Western world attired in Western raiment.

At our approach the lamas turned and spread their hands in our direction, spread their hands in welcome. I saw that one of them was my Guide and friend, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, so I knew that all would be well for this man was good and good only. Another figure I saw was even more eminent when upon the earthly plane, but now he was just one of the welcoming "committee" awaiting us.

Our happy greetings were soon exchanged, and then as one we moved into the body of the great temple, traversing the central hall and moving further into that building. We entered a small room the existence of which was not easy to discern, it appeared as if the walls slid away and, admitting us to its presence, closed solidly behind us.

My Guide, obviously the spokesman, turned to me and said, "My brother, here is the young man whose body you are going to inhabit." I turned and faced the young man

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aghast. Certainly there was no resemblance at all between us, he was much smaller than I, and the only resemblance between us was that he was bald the same as I! My Guide laughed at me and shook an admonitory finger at my nose: "Now, now, Lobsang," he laughed, "not so quick with your decisions. All this has been planned, first I am going to show you some pictures from the Akashic Record." And this he did.

Upon completing our viewing of the Record he said, addressing the young man, "Now young man, I think it is time that you told us something about yourself, for if one is to take over your body then it certainly is time for the one taking over to know that with which he is faced."

The young man, so addressed, looked very truculent indeed and replied in sullen tones, "Well, no, I have nothing to say about my past, it has always been held against me. Whatever I do say about my past it will only be used to pull me down." My Guide looked sadly at him and said, "Young man, we here have vast experience of these things and we do not judge a man by what his parentage is alleged to be but what that man is himself." My Guide sighed and then said, "You were going to commit the mortal sin of suicide, a sin indeed, a sin which could have cost you dear in many many lives of hardship to atone. We offer you peace, peace in the astral, so that you may gain understanding of some of those things which have troubled you throughout your life. The more you cooperate the more easily can we help you as well as helping that task which we have before us." The young man shook his head in negation, and said, "No, the agreement was that I wanted to leave my body, you wanted to stuff someone else in it, that's all the agreement was, I hold you to it".

Suddenly there was a flash and the young man disappeared. The old lama with me, who was now a young man full health, exclaimed, "Oh dear, dear, with such truculent thoughts he could not stay with us here on this astral plane. Now we shall have to go to where he is sleeping in a room alone. But for this night we must let him sleep, we do not want to injure the body, so I shall have to return somehow to Lhasa with you until the next night."

Time passed, and I could see that the old lama was failing rapidly, so I said to him, "time we went into the astral." "Yes," he replied, "I shall not see this body of mine again. I must go, we must go, for if I die before I am in the astral that will delay us."

Together we encountered that jerk and soared on and upwards, but not into the astral world we had visited before. This time we soared across the world to a house in England. We saw in the physical the face of the man whom I had previously seen only in the astral. He looked so discontented, so unhappy. We tried to attract his attention but he was sleeping very soundly indeed. The old lama whispered, "Are you coming?" I whispered, "Are you coming?" And we kept it up, first one and then the other, until at last very very reluctantly the astral form of this man emerged from his physical body. Slowly it oozed out, slowly it coalesced above him in the exact shape of his body, then it reversed its position, head of the astral body to the feet. The form tilted and landed on his feet.

He certainly looked very truculent and, I could see, he had absolutely no recol-

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lection of seeing us before. This was astounding to me, but my companion whispered that he had been in such a bad temper and had slammed back in his body so violently that he had completely obliterated all memories of what had happened to him. "So you want to leave your body?" I asked. "I most certainly do," he almost snarled back at me. "I absolutely hate it here." I looked at him and I shuddered with apprehension and, not to put too fine a point upon it, with pure fright. How was I going to take over the body of a man like this? Such a truculent man, so difficult. But, there it was. He laughed and said, "so YOU want my body? Well it doesn't matter what you want, it doesn't matter who you are in England, all that matters is who do you know, how much have you got."

We talked to him for a time and he grew calmer and I said, "Well, one thing, you will have to grow a beard. I cannot shave my beard because my jaws have been damaged by the Japanese. Can you grow a beard?" "Yes, sir," he replied, "I can and I will."

I thought for a moment and then I said, "Very well, you should be able to grow a suitable beard in a month. In one month's time, then, I will come and I will take over your body and you shall be allowed to go to an astral world so that you may recover your tranquillity and know that there is joy in living." Then I said, "It would help us greatly, greatly, if you would tell us your life story because although we have seen much in the astral by way of the Akashic Records there still is a boon to be derived by hearing the actual experiences from the person concerned."

He looked dreadfully truculent again, and said, "No, no I cannot bear to speak of it, I am not going to say another word."

Sadly we turned away and went into the astral world so that we could again consult the Akashic Record to see much of his life, but in the Akashic Record one sees all that has happened, one does not necessarily get the unspoken opinions of a person, we see the act but not the thought which preceded the act.

But let us now take a leap forward from those days many years ago. The young man now, many many years in the astral world, has mellowed somewhat and to some small extent appreciates the difficulties with which we are confronted. He has, then, agreed to tell us his own life story. He upon the astral world, and I, Lobsang Rampa, here upon the world of Earth trying to write down precisely as dictated those things which the young man tells.

We will have his story shortly, but it is necessary to emphasize that names will not be given for they cause distress to others. This is not a story of vengeance, this is not a story of bitterness. Actually, it is a story in this book of triumph over seemingly impossible obstacles. There have been many attempts to stop my books but I have ever been mindful of the way a man steps forth, even though dogs be yapping at his feet; I have ever been mindful that a man can continue his work even though midges and blowflies swarm about him. So I say, I have no need for bitterness for that which I wanted to do is now possible, and my present task is just to complete the task of another who "fell by the roadside."

Again, I say with the utmost sincerity at my command that all these books of mine

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are true, utterly true, they are written without authors' license, they contain the truth as these things happened to me. All the things that I write about I can do, but not for public exhibition because I am neither charlatan nor showman. The things I do are for the completion of my task.

So now let us turn the page and read what there is that the young man said.

CHAPTER EIGHT

This is the story of the life of the Host. It is a story which is difficult in the telling because the teller is on the astral plane and the one who has to transcribe it is upon the earth plane in the city of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. This life story is out of context, it interposes a break between that which has already been written and the part which naturally would continue, but when one is dealing with affairs of the astral then one has to make some concessions in the matter of time because time on the astral plane is not the same as time on the earth plane. Hence this life story is being given now, and the explanation as to why it is being now is made here to avoid a spate of letters asking all manner of questions. From this point on, then two and until I so indicate everything written is dictated by the one whom we will call the "Host."

Grandfather was a very important man indeed; at least in the rural district of Plympton which, so far as I remember, included Plympton St. Mary, Plympton St. Maurice, Underwood and Colebrook, together with quite a number of other sub-locations.

Grandfather was Chief of the Waterworks of Plympton. Every day he used to go in pony and trap all the way up the hill until a mile or so uphill he came to an enclosed mound with a little hut on it, the reservoir was covered in.

Grandfather used to go up there with a four foot stick, one end of which was saucer shaped and the other rounded. He used to walk about with his ear to the saucer shaped end, the other end he put in contact with the ground and he could hear the water rushing through the pipes below to feed the taps of Plympton, Underwood, Colebrook, and other districts.

Grandfather also had quite a thriving business, employing several men and a lot of apprentices. He taught them plumbing—hence the scurrilous tales which later were to arise—tinsmithing, and general engineering. In those days, right at the start of the century, people did not rush to supermarkets to obtain kettles, saucepans, frying pans, and all the rest of it; these things were made by hand, and Grandfather's men made them.

Grandfather lived at Mayoralty House in Plympton St. Maurice, the house really had been the house of the Mayor and it was right opposite the Guildhall and the Police Station.

Mayoralty House consisted of four to five acres of land divided into three sections. The first section abutted from the four story house and formed a walled garden of probably just under an acre. In that garden near the house there was a grotto built of very

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large pebbles and with windows of various colored glasses. Outside that there was a small lawn with flowers and plants all along the edges. In the middle there was a large fish pond nicely tiled and with a fountain and with waterwheels at the ends. A jet of water could be turned on and the waterwheels would spin around. Then there was a little bob which went down into the water, and at certain times of the day fish would pull on that bob and a bell would ring and then they would be fed.

Facing the fish pond there were two large wall aviaries, very carefully maintained and thoroughly cleaned. In these there were two dead trees fixed against the wall and it provided an ideal spot for the very tame birds. The birds were so tame that when Grandfather went into the aviaries, by opening the doors of course, none of the birds flew out.

Further down to that first part of the garden there was a greenhouse, one of Grandfather's joys. And beyond that a small orchard.

Outside that walled garden there was a private roadway which left the main street and went down under part of Mayoralty House—which went as a bridge across that roadway and at the bottom there were what had been malthouses in days gone by. The malthouses were not used when I knew them because it was much cheaper, apparently, to ship malt in to Plympton from a few hundred miles away.

By the malthouse there was the Fire Station. Grandfather owned the Fire Brigade and he had horses which drew the fire engines to the scene of the fire. He did all this as a public service, but if businesses or big households were saved from burning down then Grandfather, of course, charged them a reasonable fee. But for poor people he made no charge. The fire engines were very well maintained and they were manned by volunteers or by his own staff.

Here, too, there were the yards where much of his out-door equipment was kept, wagons and things like that. Here, too, he had two peacocks which were his pride and joy and which always came to him when he made certain noises.

One went through that yard and through a gate into a garden which was, I suppose, about two and a half or three acres in extent. Here he grew vegetables, fruit trees, and the whole garden was extremely well cared for.

Beneath the house—beneath that four story house—there were workshops without any windows but seemingly well ventilated. Here master craftsmen, tinsmiths, coppersmiths, and apprentices worked, and they had to work quite hard too.

Grandfather had two sons as well as a daughter. Both sons were thrust willy-nilly into apprenticeship. They had to learn general engineering, tinsmithing, coppersmithing—and the ubiquitous plumbing, and they had to stay at their studies until they could pass all the tests and get a certificate of registration.

My Father was quite a good engineer but after a time he broke away from Grandfather saying that Grandfather's control was too strict, too domineering. My Father went away to a different house still in St. Maurice but it was called Brick House because it was the only red brick house in that street. Father married and for a time lived in St. Maurice.

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First a son was born who shortly died, and then a daughter was born, and quite a time after I was born, and I have always believed that I was the unwanted accident, certainly I was never favored in any way, I was never popular, never permitted to have friends. Everything I did was automatically wrong, everything my sister did was automatically right. It makes one rather disgruntled after a time to always be the unwanted one and to see the favorite get everything, to see her with her friends and her parties and all the rest of it. Even second best was considered to be too good for me.

Mother and Father moved to Ridgeway in the Parish of St. Mary. There they started a business—no, not plumbing—an engineering business which included electricity which was only then coming into popular use. My Father was a very nice man indeed so far as he could afford to be a very nice man. He was a Scorpio, and my Mother was a Virgo.

She had come from an extremely good family in another part of Devonshire. The family had had a lot of money previously and a lot of land, but her father and a neighbor fell to quarreling over a right-of-way, and—well—eventually they went to law. A verdict was given and was appealed, and so it went on until they had hardly any money left, certainly they had no money to continue litigation, and so the land which had been the cause of all the trouble was sold.

Mother and Father did not get on. Mother was too domineering, she was known locally as "the Lady" because of her high ambitions. She had been made very bitter by the loss of the family fortunes. Unfortunately she seemed to take her bitterness out on her husband and on me.

Grandfather had a brother who was a most talented artist, he was a Royal Academician and had made a very satisfactory name for himself. I remember one painting of his in particular always enthralled me. It was a picture of the Old Barbican, Plymouth; the Barbican as it was when the Mayflower sailed for the U.S.A. This was a wonderful picture, it glowed with living color, it was mellow, and one could look at it and actually soon find that one was "there." Uncle Richard, as we called him, always said that that picture would go to one of us children. It did, to my sister and it is one thing which I really, really coveted, it was the thing that I wanted above all else except a few years later when I had been promised a model train—a blue train—and to my juvenile eyes it was the most wonderful train in the whole world, I had been solemnly promised it, and then on the day I was to have it I was told "Oh no you can't have it. Your sister wants a piano. Your Father and I are going to get it now." Yes, I really wanted that train as I wanted the picture.

Things like that were always happening. My sister had a wonderful bicycle, I was left to walk. But that is not the purpose of this writing, I am having to tell all this because, I am told, it was part of the agreement when I consented to have my body taken over. I was sick of the damned body anyhow. It was all wrong.

I was born sickly, and my birth made my mother very ill. She seemed to get some sort of poisoning when I was born, and for some strange reason it was held against me just as if I had poisoned her. There was nothing I could do about it, I was too young to know anything about it.

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Anyway she was very ill, so was I and I was ill all my life on Earth. I was sickly. We had a doctor, Dr. Duncan Stamp, he was one of the real doctors, always studying, always getting different letters after his name. He hadn't much sympathy, but he had plenty of knowledge. He didn't like me and I didn't like him. But I remember one extraordinary thing; one day I was—well, they said I was dying. This Dr. Stamp came along to my bed and he seemed to hang something up from a light fixture and run tubes down to me. To this day I don't know what he did but I made a recovery, and I always thought of him after as the miracle worker.

I remember in the Great War, that is the First Great War. My parents and I and my sister were on North Road Station, Plymouth. We had had to visit somebody in an area called Penny-Come-Quick. It was late at night and suddenly we heard gunfire and searchlight beams flickered across the sky, and in the beam of searchlight I saw my first Zeppelin. It flew over Plymouth and then went out to sea again, but that is another incident I have never forgotten, how that ship looked in the crossed beams of light.

Plympton is an old old place full of history. There is the great church of St. Mary's at the foot of Church Hill. As one went down the hill the church spire seemed to be still higher than the top of the hill. One went down and went along by the churchyard, and then turned left. If one passed the church one came to the priory and various old religious houses, the use of which had been discontinued by the clergy because, apparently, some division of power had taken place and the head offices of the church had been removed to Buckfast.

Behind the priory there was a pleasant stream in which there were reeds and rushes. Here people used to get reeds and rushes for the making of baskets and other containers. Here, too, a hundred or so years before, they used to make mead which was the drink of the time.

The church was a most imposing place, of grey stone with a great tower with four little pillars at each corner of the tower. The bells were wonderful when properly played and campanologists used to come from all over Devon to ring the changes, as they called them, and the Plympton bell ringers used to go around in their turn showing their own skill.

St. Maurice church was not so grand as that of St. Mary. It was smaller and was obviously a satellite church. In those days St. Maurice and St. Mary's were separate communities with hardly any social movement between them. Colebrook and Underwood had no churches, they had instead to go to St. Maurice or St. Mary.

Plympton had its share of great houses, but most of them had been badly damaged by Oliver Cromwell and his men. Many of them had been demolished by the order of Judge Jeffreys, but Plympton Castle, that was a place that fascinated me. There was a great mound with the remnants of sturdy stone walls on it, and the walls were so thick, and some of us found that there was a tunnel going through the walls lengthwise. Some of the more hardy boys said they had been in to a strange chamber below the walls in which there were supposed to be skeletons, but I never got to be that venturesome, I just accepted their word. Plympton Castle stood on an amphitheater, a big round space with

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a raised bank around it. The raised bank was a very nice place as a promenade, but the sunken piece in-between—as if in the centre of a saucer—was much used by circuses and other forms of public entertainment.

I was sent to my first school to a place called—of all unlikely names—Co-op Fields. It was so named because originally it was property owned by the Plympton Co- operative Wholesale Society. The land had been sold to raise funds for other development and a few houses had been built there, then a few more, and a few more, so that in the end it became a separate community, almost a small village on its own. And here I went to school. It was—well, I think it would be called a Dames School. It was Miss Gillings and her sister. Together they ran what purported to be a school, but really it was more to keep unruly children from plaguing their unwilling parents. The walk from Ridgeway right out to Miss Gillings school was a terrible ordeal for me in my sickly condition, but there was nothing I could do about it, I just had to go. After a time, though, I was considered to be too big to go to that school any longer so I was transferred to a Preparatory School. It was called Mr. Beard's school. Mr. Beard was a nice old man, a really clever old man, but he could not impose discipline.

He had retired from school life and then, getting bored with retirement, he had opened his own school, and the only premises he could find was a big room attached to the George Hotel. The George Hotel was at the top of George Hill and was quite well known. One entered under an archway and the ground was paved, and then to get to Mr. Beard's school one had to go all the way through the courtyard, past all the former stables and coach houses.

At the far side of the yard there were wooden steps going up to a room which looked as if it had been an assembly hall. That was the first school where I started to learn anything, and I did not learn much, but that was my fault not the fault of old Beard. Actually, he was far too gentle to be a schoolmaster, people took advantage of him.

After a time the Plympton Grammar school reopened in a fresh location. Plympton Grammar School was one of the most famous Grammar Schools of England, many famous people had been there including Joshua Reynolds.

In the old Grammar School in St. Maurice his name and the names of many other very famous people were carved into the desks and into the woodwork, but that school building had had to be closed down because the ravages of time had attacked the building and the upper floors were considered to be unsafe.

After a long search a very large house was secured which was in the shadow of Plympton Castle, in the shadow, actually, of that round part where the circuses use to come.

Vast sums were paid for its conversion, and I was one of the first pupils to be enrolled in that school. I didn't like it a bit, I hated the place. Some of the teachers had been demobilized from the forces and instead of treating children as children they treated children as bloody-minded troops. One teacher in particular had a most vicious habit of breaking sticks of chalk in half and throwing each half with all his might at some of-

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fender, and although you might think that chalk couldn't do much damage I have seen a boy's face lacerated by the impact. Nowadays, I suppose the teacher would have gone to prison for bodily assault, but at least it kept us in order.

For recreation we had to go to the playing fields of the old Grammar School which gave us a walk of about a mile, a mile there, then all the exercise, etcetera, a mile back.

Eventually time came to leave school. I hadn't done anything too good but, then, I hadn't done anything too bad either. In addition to schoolwork I had to take some correspondence courses, and I got a few little bits of paper saying I was qualified in this, that, or something else. But when the time came to leave school my parents, without any such frivolities as asking me what I would like to be, apprenticed me to a motor engineering firm in Plymouth.

So almost to the day on which I left school I was sent to this firm in Old Town Street, Plymouth. They sold a few cars, etcetera, but they were more concerned with motorcycles, in fact they were the South Devon agents for Douglas motorcycles. Again, it was an unsympathetic place because all that mattered was work. I used to leave Plympton early in the morning and travel by bus to Plymouth, five and a half miles away. By the time lunch time came I was famished, so whatever the weather I used to take my sandwiches—there was nothing to drink except water—and went to a little park at the back of St. Andrew's church, Plymouth. There I used to sit in the park and get my sandwiches down as fast as I could, otherwise I should have been late.

It was very very hard work indeed because sometime we apprentices were sent out as far away as Crown Hill to fetch a heavy motorcycle. Well, we went to Crown Hill or other places by bus—only one of us to one place, of course—and then we were faced with the problem of getting the blasted bikes back. We couldn't ride them because they were faulty, so the only ride we got was going downhill.

I remember one time I had to go to Crown Hill to fetch a very big Harley Davidson motorcycle. The owner had telephoned in and said the bike could be picked up right outside, so I went there, got off the bus, saw this motorbike, pushed it off its stand and pushed it away. I had done about three miles when a police car pulled up right in front of me. Two policemen got out and I thought they were going to kill me! One grabbed me by the neck, the other grabbed my arms behind me, and all so suddenly was propped up by the side of the road and I was bundled into the back of the police car and whisked off to Crown Hill Police Station. Here a shouting Police sergeant threatened me with all manner of terrible deaths unless I told them who were my fellow gangsters.

Now, I wasn't very old at this time and I just didn't know what he was talking about, so he gave me a few cuffs about the ears and then put me in a cell. He wouldn't listen to my explanation that I had come to fetch a motorcycle as instructed.

About eight hours later one of the men from the firm came and identified me, and confirmed that I had been quite legitimately collecting a faulty motor bike. The police sergeant gave me a cuff across the face and told me not to get in trouble again and not to bother them. So I don't like policemen, I have had trouble with police all through my life,

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and I would swear this: Never have I done anything which warrants police persecution. Each time it has just been police slovenliness, such as that time when they wouldn't let me explain what had happened.

The next day, though, the owner of the bike came into the firm and laughed like a maniac. He was quite unsympathetic, he didn't seem to think what a shock it was to be hauled off and taken to a police cell.

One day I could hardly get out of bed, I felt ill, I felt so ill I just wanted to die. It was no good, my Mother insisted on getting me out of bed. So eventually I had to go without any breakfast, the day was wet and the day was cold. She went with me to the bus stop and shoved me on the old Devon Motor Transport bus so roughly that I fell to my knees.

I got to work, but after about two hours there I fainted and somebody said I ought to be taken home, but the man in charge said they didn't have time to run around after apprentices in trouble, so I was kept there until the end of the day, no breakfast, no lunch, nothing.

At the end of the working day I made my way most dizzily along the street toward the bus stop in front of St. Andrew's church. Fortunately there was a bus waiting and I collapsed into a corner seat. When I got home I just had enough strength to totter into bed. There wasn't much interest in any welfare, nobody asked how I was feelings, nobody asked why I couldn't eat my dinner, I just went off to bed.

I had a terrible night, I felt I was on fire and I was wet through with perspiration. In the morning my Mother came along and awakened me quite roughly—for I had fallen into an exhausted sleep—and even she could see that I wasn't well. Eventually she phoned Dr. Stamp. Half a day later he came. He took one look at me and said, "Hospital!" So the ambulance came—in those days the ambulance was run by the local undertaker—and I was taken off to the South Devon and East Cornwall Hospital.

I had very bad lung trouble. I stayed in that hospital for about eleven weeks, and then there was great discussion as to whether I should be sent to a Sanatorium or not because I'd got T.B. Father and Mother were opposed to it because, they said, they wouldn't have time to come and visit me if I was sent to a Sanatorium a few miles away. So I stayed at home and I didn't get much better. Every so often I had to go back to hospital. Then my sight went wrong and I was taken to the Royal Eye Infirmary, Mutley Plain, which wasn't so far from the South Devon and East Cornwall Hospital. This was quite a pleasant hospital, if one can say anything is pleasant when one is blind. But eventually I was released from the hospital with greatly impaired sight and I went home again.

By now wireless was well known—it used to be wireless before radio. My Father had a crystal set and I thought it was the most marvelous thing I had ever seen in my life. Father studied a lot about radio and he made vast radio sets with many valves to them, and then he set up in business building radio sets for people and doing electrical work for people.

At this time it was decided I should go away for a change, and so, as sick as I was, I was put on an old bicycle and sent with a workman to Lydford where I had an aunt. I

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often wished that this aunt had been my mother. She was a very good woman indeed, and I loved her as I certainly did not love my Mother. She looked after me, she really treated me as if I were one of her own children, but, as she said, its not much to have a sick child ride twenty-five miles when he can hardly draw breath. But eventually I had to return home and the journey was much easier this time. Lydford is up in the Devonshire moors, up in Dartmoor beyond Tavistock, not too far from Okehampton, and the air was pure there and the food good.

Back at home in Plympton I started studying other correspondence courses, and then my Mother told me I ought to work. So my Father had a lot of radio sets and electrical stuff so I had to travel about selling the things to small dealers. I went all along Elburton, Modbury, Okehampton, and other places like that selling accumulators, radio parts, and electrical stuff. But after a time the very very harried life proved to be too much for me and my health broke down. I was driving a car at that time and I went blind. Now, it is a thoroughly unpleasant thing to lose one's sight completely and utterly when driving.

Fortunately I was able to stop the car without any damage and I just stayed where I was until somebody came to see what was happening and why I was blocking traffic. For a time I couldn't convince people that I was ill and that I couldn't see, but eventually the police were called and they had me taken by ambulance to hospital. My parents were informed and their first thought was about the car. When the car was driven home it was found that all the stuff I had had in it was stolen, radio sets, batteries, test equipment, everything. So I was not popular. But a spell in hospital put me right for a time, and then I went home again.

I studied some more and eventually it was decided that I should try to get training as a radio operator. So I went to Southampton and outside Southampton there was a special school which trained one to be radio operator aboard aircraft. I stayed there for some time, and passed my examinations and got a license as a first-class wireless operator. I had to go to Croydon to take the examination, and I was successful. At the same time I learned to fly aircraft and managed to get a license at that as well. But—I could not pass the medical examination for a commercial license and so I was grounded before my career started.

Back at home I was blamed quite a lot for having bad health and for wasting money in taking these courses when my health was so poor that I had been rejected. I felt a bit irritated by that because I was not to blame for my bad health, I didn't want to be ill. But there was a big family conference and my parents decided something would have to be done, I was just wasting my life.

At that identical moment the local sanitary inspector who was very friendly with my parents said there was a great opening for smoke inspectors, particularly in the big cities, people were getting worried about the ecology and there was too much smoke pollution from factories and industrial concerns so a new category of smoke inspectors had been started. There were, of course, sanitary inspectors and sanitary inspectors who were meat inspectors, but now there was a new category—smoke inspectors. The chief sanitary inspector said it would be just the thing for me, it was a good job, well

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paid, and I would have to take a special course, naturally. So a new correspondence course had just been brought out for smoke inspectors. I studied it at home and passed very quickly, in three months actually, and then I was told I would have to go to London to study with the Royal Sanitary Institute in Buckingham Palace Road. So not too happily my parents advanced the money and I went to London. Every day I attended classes at the Royal Sanitary Institute, and often we went out on field trips going to factories, power stations, and all manner of queer places. At last, after three months, we had to go to an immense examination hall where there seemed to be thousands of people milling around. We were all in little groups; one who was going to take a particular examination would be isolated from others taking the same type of examination. Anyway, I passed the examination and got a certificate as a smoke inspector.

I returned to Plympton bearing my certificate and thinking that now everything would be plain sailing. But it was not to be. I applied for a job in Birmingham, and I went to Birmingham—to Lozelles—for interview. There I was told that I couldn't get the job because I was not a resident of that county.

Back to Plympton I went and tried for a job in Plymouth. But the Plymouth city council would not employ me for much the same reason except I was in the right county, but not in the right city. So it went on, and after a few years like this in which I did anything that I could do—anything to bring in enough money to keep body and soul together and to keep me in some sort of clothing—my Father died. He had been in very poor health for years. Most of the time he had been in bed, and about a year before he died his business had been sold off and the shop had been made into a doctor's surgery. The glass windows were painted green and the shop itself was the surgery with our living part being used as the consulting room and dispensary. My Mother and I lived in what had been our workrooms.

But after Father's death the doctor-combine decided to move to a fresh area and so we would have no income at all. My health was not at all good, so my Mother went to her daughter, my sister, and I had been a prize student of a correspondence college so I got a job with a surgical appliance firm in Perivale, Middlesex. I was appointed first as works manager, but when the owner of the firm found that I could write good advertising copy then he made me advertising manager as well.

I had to take courses in surgical fitting, and after that I became a surgical fitter consultant. I was considered so good at this work that I was moved from Perivale to the heart of London, and I was the chief fitter in the London offices.

Just before I left work at the London offices war was declared between England and Germany. Everything was blacked out and I found the journey to London from Perivale and back every day to be absolutely exhausting, it tried my strength to the utmost, and during this time I got married. Well, I do not propose to say anything about this because I understand that the press on Earth have already said too much, nearly all of it untrue. I have been asked to talk about my life, so I will confine myself strictly to my life.

We could not continue to live in Perivale because conditions in traveling were too bad, so we managed to find an apartment in the Knightsbridge area of London. It was a

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blessing to be able to go on the tube every day to my office.

The war was hotting up, things were becoming difficult, there was heavy rationing and food shortages. Bombs were dropping heavily on London. Much of my time was spent on fire watch, I had to climb rusty iron ladders going to the top of buildings and watch out for approaching German bombers, and if I saw them in time I had to give warning to the work people below.

One day I was riding through Hyde Park on my bicycle going to work and I saw bombers approaching. One dropped bombs which seemed as if they were going to come uncomfortably close to me, so I dropped my bicycle and ran for some trees. The bombs fell, they missed the Park and landed in Buckingham Palace where they did a fair amount of damage.

Everywhere, it seemed, bombs were dropping. One day I was having to go out on a special surgical fitting case and was approaching Charing Cross Station when suddenly a great bomb dropped out of the clouds, went into the station and right through the station to the Underground which was crowded with people. I can see even now the cloud of dust and scattered pieces of—what?— that were blown out of the hole in the station roof.

One night there was a terrific air raid and the place where my wife and I lived was bombed. We had to get out in the night just as we were. For a long time we wandered about in the darkness, other people were wandering about as well, everything was chaotic. Bombs were dropping and the sky was lurid with the flames of the burning East End.

We could see St. Paul's Cathedral outlined in flame and great clouds of smoke went up. Every so often we would hear the rat-tat-tat of machine-gun fire, and occasionally spent cartridges would fall down around us. Everywhere there was shrapnel falling and we wore our steel helmets cause the smoking fragments hurtling down would have gone through an unprotected body.

At last the dawn came and I phoned my employer to say that I had been bombed out. He said, "Never mind about that, you must come to work. Other people are bombed out too." So, dirty and hungry, I got on a train and went to my office. At the approach of our street there I found that it was cordoned off. I tried to go past the barrier but a most officious policeman came up and accused me of looting—tempers were quite rough at that time. Just at that moment my boss stepped out of a car and came up to me. He showed his identification papers to the policeman and together we crossed the barrier and went to our office.

Water was rushing out of everywhere. The place had been hit by a bomb and the water supply had been broken to shards. From the roof, many floors above, water was cascading over the stock. The basement was neck-deep in water and everywhere there was glass, everywhere there were stone fragments, and we turned and found a bomb casing lodged in a wall.

It was a state of chaos. There was not much worth saving. We managed to get out

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some records and just a few pieces of equipment and we all set to and tried to clean up the place a bit, but it was hopeless—there was no chance of getting the place working again. Eventually my employer said he was going to move to another part of the country, and he invited me to accompany him. I could not do so because I hadn't the money. It was very difficult indeed to buy things, and to have to set up a fresh home in some remote part of the country was an expense which I just could not contemplate. So—because I was unable to go I was out of a job, unemployed in England in wartime.

I went to various labor exchanges trying to get any employment. I tried to become a wartime policeman, but I could not pass the medical examination. Conditions were becoming desperate; one cannot live on air, and as a last resort I went to the offices of the correspondence school where I had taken so many courses.

It just so happened that they wanted a man, some of their own men had been called up, and I had—so I was told—an enviable record, and so I was told that I could be given a job in the advisory department. The pay would be five pounds a week, and I would have to live at Weybridge in Surrey. No, they said, they couldn't advance anything to help me get there. I would have to go there first for interview with one of the directors. So I made inquiries and found that the cheapest way was by Green Line Bus, so on the appointed day I went to Weybridge but there was a terrific wait, the director had not come in. I was told, "Oh, he never comes in the time he says, he might not be in until four o'clock. You'll just have to wait." Well, eventually the director did come in, he saw me and he was quite affable, and he offered me the job at five pounds a week

He told me there was an unoccupied flat over the garage and I could have this by paying what was really quite a high rent, but I was in a hurry to get employment so I agreed to his terms. I returned to London and we got our poor things, such as they were, to Weybridge, up the worn old wooden steps to the flat above the garages. The next day I started my work as a correspondence clerk, which is what it really was, to a correspondence school.

There are such a lot of high falutin terms; we now have garbage collectors called sanitation experts when all they are is garbage collectors. Some of the correspondence clerks call themselves advisory consultants or careers consultants, but still all we did was correspondence clerks' duties.

It seems to be a crime to be of a certain category. I have always been told that my Father was a plumber; actually, he wasn't, but what if he had been? Certainly he served an apprenticeship as a plumber but, like me, he had no choice. I served an apprenticeship as a motor engineer.

And anyway, how about the famous Mr. Crapper, the gentleman who invented water closets as they are today? They have not been improved since the day of old Crapper. Crapper, if you remember, was a plumber, a jolly good one, too, and his invention of the flush tank and the flush toilet endeared him to King Edward who treated Mr. Crapper as a personal friend. So, you see, a plumber can be a friend of royalty just as can a grocer; Thomas Lipton was alleged to be a grocer. Certainly he was, he had a big grocery firm, and he was a friend of King George V.

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Surely it doesn't matter what a person's father was, why is it such a disgrace to have a parent who was a tradesman? Nowadays daughters of royalty are married to tradesmen, aren't they? But I am always amused because Jesus, it is said, was the son of a carpenter. How was that a disgrace?

Well, all this is taking me a long way from my story, but I will just say here and now that I would rather be the son of a plumber than the son of those poor sick people who call themselves pressmen. To me there is no sicker job than that of pressman. A plumber clears up the messes of people. A pressman makes messes of people.

Since I have been over here I have found various things of interest, but one thing in particular which intrigues me is this; I bear quite an honored name not merely through "Uncle Richard" but through others who went before him one who was a colleague of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and another was the Lord Lieutenant, or whatever they call him, of the Tower of London. And it was at the time when an attempt was made to steal the Crown Jewels, an attempt which was thwarted.

There is much to see over here, much to learn, and I am told I have a lot yet to learn because, they say, I have not learned humility, not yet learned how to get on with people. Well, I am doing my best in dictating all this stuff which I will swear upon a stack of Bibles is the truth and nothing but the truth.

CHAPTER NINE

Life at Weybridge was not happy. I became an air raid warden. One other warden became very jealous and did everything he could to cause me harm. I offered to resign but it was not wanted for me to resign. One night there was an air raid while I was at Weybridge and after the air raid a policeman came to the door, It seemed that a small light—hardly large enough for any one to notice from a hundred feet away—was showing.

There was a faulty switch in the flat, on the landing, it was one of those old brass switches with a great knob, and I suppose the vibration caused by the banging and all that, had shaken it just to the "on" position. The policeman could see for himself that if a fly sneezed the light would come on because the spring in the tumbler was defective

But, no, the light was showing, that's all there was to it. So there was a Court appearance and a fine. And that is a thing I have resented ever since because it was so utterly unnecessary, and "the enemy" warden was the one who had reported it. After that I resigned from the A.R.P. believing that if people could not work together then it was better to break up "the party."

At Weybridge I was supposed to do everything, answer letters, persuade people to take correspondence courses, maintain the boss's cars—and he was always changing the darn things—act as unpaid messenger boy and do anything which came to hand. All for five pounds a week!

People were getting called-up, conditions were becoming more difficult, food

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was getting shorter and shorter, and from the aircraft factory at Brooklands there were always strange noises. One day a Wellington was being flight-tested and it crashed just beside the village of Weybridge. The pilot saved the village at the cost of his own life because he crashed that plane upon the electrified railway line. The plane was like a toy that had been snapped into a thousand pieces, it was scattered all over the place, but the people of Weybridge were saved because of the self-sacrifice of the pilot.

Just at this time I received my call-up papers. I had to go before a Board of Medical Examiners as a formality before entering one of the Services. On the appointed day I went to the great hall where there were crowds of other men waiting to be examined. I said to an attendant there, "I've had T.B., you know." He looked at me and said, "You look a bit of a wreck, I must say lad. Sit over there." So I sat where directed, and I sat, and I sat. Eventually when nearly everyone else in the place had been examined, the panel of doctors turned to me. "What's this?" said one, "You say you've got T.B. Do you know what T.B. is?" "I certainly do, sir," I said. "I've had it." He asked me a lot of questions and then grumphed and grumphed. Then he had a word with his associates.

At last he turned back to me as if he was making the greatest decision in the world. "I am sending you to Kingston Hospital," he said. "they will examine you there, they will soon find out if you've got T.B. or not, and if you haven't—God help you!" He carefully filled out a form, sealed it, put it in another envelope and sealed that, and then flung it at me.

I picked it off the floor and made my way home. Next day I told my employer that I had to go to hospital for examination. He appeared absolutely bored, I got the impression that he thought, "Oh why does the fellow waste my time, why doesn't he join up and get out of my sight." However, I got through my work that day, and the day after, as directed, I took the bus to Kingston-on-Thames. I made my way to a hospital there. I had all sorts of tests and then I was X-rayed. After the X-ray I was shoved in a drying cupboard where a lot of wet X-rays were hung up to dry out. After half an hour a woman came and said, "Okay, you can go home!" That was all, nothing more was said, so I just went home.

Next there came a summons to go to the T.B. Clinic at Weybridge. Of course, this was about three or four weeks later, but the summons came and off I went to the T.B. Clinic like a good little boy. By now I was heartily sick of the whole affair. At the T.B. Clinic I was seen by a most wonderful doctor who was indeed all that a doctor should be. He had my X-rays there, and he agreed with me that it was utterly stupid that I should be shunted from one department to another. He said it was perfectly obvious that I had bad lung scars through T.B., and, he said if I got in the Army, I would be a liability, not an asset. Surely England hadn't come to a state when they are called upon to enlist those who are obviously ill. "I shall send a report in to say that you are unfitted for service of any kind," he said.

Time went by, and at last I received a card in the post telling me that I would not be required for military service because I was classed as Grade Four—the lowest grade there was.

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I took the card to my employer and showed it to him and he seemed to think that—well, he'd got somebody to carry on with the work if all the others were called up. There was a frantic scramble in those days of people trying to get deferment, everybody was trying to get deferment.

The man who was manager under the employer left to get another job and another man was appointed as manager but he and I didn't get on at all, we just did not at all. He was of a type that I thoroughly disliked and I seemed to be of a type that he thoroughly disliked. However, I did the best I could, but things were becoming more and more difficult because there was more and more work without any increase in pay. It was obvious that someone was rushing around to the employer telling tales, etcetera, not necessarily true tales either.

One day after work I was just meandering through the garden. We had a garden of three and a half acres and I was passing through a little wooded copse. It was evening and growing dusk. Somehow I tripped over an exposed root and went down with a horrible thunk. Literally it jerked me out of myself!

I stood upright, but then—God bless my soul! I found that “I” wasn't “me” because I was standing upright and my body was lying flat on its face. I looked about in utter amazement, and I saw some strange looking people around me. Monks, I thought, what the devil are monks doing here? I looked at them, and I looked at—well, I suppose it was my body on the ground. But then I got a voice or something in my head. First I had the impression that it was some strange foreign lingo, but as I thought about it I discovered that I could understand what was being said.

“Young man,” the voice said in my head, “you are thinking of an evil matter, you are thinking of doing away with your life. That is a very bad thing indeed. Suicide is wrong, no matter the cause, no matter the imagined reason or excuse, suicide is always wrong.”

All right for you,” I thought, “you haven't any troubles like I have. Here I am in this—well, I had an awful job not to put in words the exact description of the place—and I can't get a rise, and my boss seems to have taken a dislike to me, why should I stay here? There are plenty of trees about and a nice rope to throw over.”

But I am not saying too much about this because a thought was put in my mind saying that if I wanted to I could get release from what I considered to be the tortures of Earth. If I wanted to, if I was really serious, I could do something for mankind by making my body available to some ghost or spirit which wanted to hop in almost before I had hopped out. It seemed a lot of rubbish to me, but I thought I would give it a whirl and let them talk on. First, they said, as a sign of genuine interest, I had to change my name. They told me a strange name they wanted me to adopt, but—well, I told my wife only that I was going to change my name, she thought I was a bit mad or something and let it go at that, and so I did change my name quite legally.

Then my teeth started giving trouble. I had a horrible time. At last I couldn't stick it any longer and I went to a local dentist. He made an attempt to extract the tooth but it

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wouldn't come. He made a hole in the thing so he could use an elevator—not the type people use to travel to different floors, but the type which is meant to elevate a tooth by leverage. This dentist got on the phone to some specialist in London, and I had to go to a nursing home in a hurry.

My wife told my employer that I had to go to a nursing home, and she was met with the statement, "Well, I have to work when I have toothache!" And that was all the sympathy we got. So I went to this nursing home, at my own expense, of course, there was no such thing as health schemes like you seem to have now, and I had this little operation which was not so easy after all. The dentist was good, the anesthetist was even better. I stayed in the nursing home a week and then returned to Weybridge.

There were quite a number of unpleasant little incidents, needlings and all that sort of thing, and unjust accusations. There is no point in going into all the details, raking up muck, because, after all, I am not a pressman.

But there were false accusations, so my wife and I talked it over and we decided that we couldn't stick it any longer, so I handed in my notice. From that moment I might have been a leper, or I might have had an even worse form of plague, because for the rest of the week I sat in my office, no one came to see me, they apparently had been told not to, and no work of any kind was given to me. I just stayed there like a convict serving out time. At the end of the week that was it, I was finished.

We left Weybridge with joy and we went to London. We moved about a bit, oh gracious, I forget how many places we tried, and anyway it doesn't matter, but then we found that conditions were intolerable and we moved on to another place, a suburb of London called Thames Ditton.

Oh, I am so anxious to get this silly affair over because I do not enjoy talking about this, but I was in such a hurry that I have forgotten one bit. Here it is: I had been told sometime before that I would have to grow a beard. Well, I thought, what's it matter? Just as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, so while I was at Weybridge I grew this beard and was jeered at quite a bit by my employer and by those who worked with me. Never mind, I thought, I wouldn't be with them much longer.

We moved to Thames Ditton; for a very short time we stayed in a lodging house which was run by a funny old woman who just could not see dirt. She thought she lived in a ducal mansion, or something, and was quite incapable of seeing immense cobwebs high up in the corners of the stairway. But she was too ladylike and so we looked for another place. Down the road there was such a place, a house which was being rented as an upper and lower flat.

We took the place, we had no thought of how we were going to get money because I had no job, no job at all. Instead I was just doing anything to earn odd bits of money to keep us alive. I went to the Unemployment Exchange but because I had left my employment instead being fired I was not able to get any unemployment benefit. So that never have I had any unemployment money, I managed without, to this day I don't know how, but I did.

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I had an old bicycle and I used to ride around trying to get work, but no, no work was available. The war had ended, men had come back from the Forces, and the labor market was saturated. It was all right for them, they had unemployment benefit and perhaps a pension; I had nothing.

Then one night I was approached by a group of men. They hooked me out of my body, and talked to me, and they asked me if I still wanted to get out of my body into what I then thought was Paradise. I suppose it is Paradise, but these people called it the astral world. I assured them I wanted to get out even more than before, so they told me that the very next day I must stay at home. One man, he was all done up in a yellow robe, took me to the window and pointed out. He said, "That tree—you must go to that tree and put your hands up on that branch, and go to pull yourself up and then let go." He gave me the exact time at which I must do this, telling me it was utterly vital to follow instructions to the letter, otherwise I would have a lot of pain, and so would other people. But worse, for me—I would still be left on the Earth.

The next day my wife thought I had gone bonkers or something because I didn't go out as usual, I pottered about. And then a minute or two before the appointed time I went out into the garden and walked over to the tree. I pulled on a branch of ivy, or whatever it is that ivy has, and reached up to the branch as directed. And then I felt as if I had been struck by lightning. I had no need to pretend to fall, I did fall—whack down! I fell down, and then, good gracious me, I saw a silver rope sticking out me. I went to grab it to see what it was but gently my hands were held away. I lay there on the ground feeling horribly frightened because two people were at that silver rope, and they were doing something to it, and a third person was there with another silver rope in his hand, and, horror of horrors, I could see through the whole bunch of them, so I wondered if I was seeing all this or if I had dashed my brains out, it was all so strange.

At last there was a sucking sort of noise and a plop, and then I found—oh joy of joy—I was floating free in a beautiful, beautiful world, and that means that having gone so far I fulfilled my part of the contract, I have said all I am going to about my past life, and now I am going back to my own part of the astral world. . .

I am Lobsang Rampa, and I have finished transcribing that which was so unwillingly, so ungraciously, told to me by the person whose body I took over. Let me continue where he left off.

His body was upon the ground; twitching slightly, and I—well, I confess without too much shame, that I was twitching also but my twitches were caused by fright. I didn't like the look of this body stretched out there in front of me, but a lama of Tibet follows orders, pleasant orders as well as unpleasant ones, so I stood by while two of my brother lamas wrestled with the man's Silver Cord.

They had to attach mine before his was quite disconnected. Fortunately the poor fellow was in an awful state of daze and so he was quiescent.

At last, after what seemed hours but actually was only about a fifth of a second, they got my Silver Cord attached and his detached. Quickly he was led away, and I looked

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at that body to which I was now attached and shuddered.

But then, obeying orders, I let my astral form sink down on that body which was going to be mine. Ooh, the first contact was terrible, cold, slimy. I shot off in the air again in fright. Two lamas came forward to steady me, and gradually I sank again.

Again I made contact, and I shivered with horror and of repulsion. This truly was an incredible, a shocking experience and one that I never want to undergo again. I seemed to be too large, or the body seemed to be too small. I felt cramped, I felt I was being squeezed to death, and the smell! The difference! My old body was tattered and dying, but at least it had been my own body. Now I was stuck in this alien thing and I didn't like it a bit.

Somehow—and I cannot explain this—I fumbled about inside trying to get hold of the motor nerves of the brain. How did I make this confounded thing work? For a time I lay there just helpless, just as if I were paralyzed. The body would not work. I seemed to be fumbling like an inexperienced driver with a very intricate car. But at last with the help of my astral brothers I got control of myself.

I managed to make the body work. Shakily I got to my feet, and nearly screamed with horror as I found that I was walking backwards instead of forwards. I teetered and fell again. It was indeed a horrendous experience. I was truly nauseated by this body and was in fear that I should not be able to manage it.

I lay upon my face on the ground and just could not move, then from the corner of an eye I saw two lamas standing by looking highly concerned at the difficulty I was having. I growled, “Well, you try it for yourself, see if you can make this abominable thing do what you tell it to do!”

Suddenly one of the lamas said, “Lobsang! Your fingers are twitching, now try with your feet.” I did so, and found that there was an amazing difference between Eastern and Western bodies. I never would have thought such a thing possible, but then I remembered something I had heard while a ship's Engineer; for ships in Western waters the propeller should rotate in one direction, and for Eastern waters it should rotate in the opposite direction. It seems clear to me, I said to myself, that I've got to start out all over again. So I kept calm and let myself lift out of the body, and from the outside I looked at it carefully. The more I looked at it the less I liked it, but then, I thought, there was nothing for it but to try once again. So again I squeezed uncomfortably into the slimy, cold thing which was a Western body.

With immense effort I tried to rise, but fell again, and then at last I managed to scramble somehow to my feet and pressed my back against that friendly tree.

There was a sudden clatter from the house and a door was flung open. A woman came running out saying, “Oh! What have you done now. Come in and lie down.” It gave me quite a shock. I thought of those two lamas with me and I was fearful that the woman might throw a fit at the sight of them, but obviously they were completely invisible to her, and that again was one of the surprising things of my life. I could always see these people who visited me from the astral, but if I talked to them and then some other person

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came in—well, the other person thought I was talking to myself and I didn't want to get the reputation of being off my head.

The woman came toward me and as she looked at me a very startled expression crossed her face. I really thought she was going to get hysterical but she controlled herself somehow and put an arm across my shoulders.

Silently I thought of how to control the body and then very slowly, thinking a step at a time, I made my way into the house and went up the stairs, and flopped upon what was obviously my bed.

For three whole days I remained in that room pleading indisposition while I practiced how to make the body do what I wanted it to do, and trying to contain myself because this was truly the most frightening experience I had had in my life. I had put up with all manner of torments in China and in Tibet and in Japan, but this was a new and utterly revolting experience, the experience of being imprisoned in the body of another person and having to control it.

I thought of that which I had been taught so many years ago, so many years ago that indeed it seemed to be a different life. "Lobsang," I had been told, "in the days of long ago the Great Beings from far beyond this system and Beings who were not in human form, had to visit this Earth for special purposes. Now, if they came in their own guise they would attract too much attention, so always they had bodies ready which they could enter and control, and appear to be the natives of the place. In the days to come," I was told, "you will have such an experience, and you will find it to be utterly shocking."

I did!

For the benefit of those who are genuinely interested let me say a few things about transmigration because really I have so much to tell the world, and yet because of the vilification of the press people have been hounded into believing my story. I will tell you more about that in the next Book, but one of the things I was going to do was to show people how transmigration worked because there are so many advantages to it. Think of this, which I am going to put to you as a definite possibility; man kind has sent a messenger to the Moon, but mankind does not know how to travel in deep space. In relation to the distances in the Universe the journey to the Moon pales into utter insignificance It would take many millions of years for a space ship to travel to some other stars, and yet there is a much simpler way, and I say to you absolutely definitely that astral travel could be that way. It has been done before, it is being done now by creatures (I say "creatures" because they are not in human form) who come from a completely different galaxy. They are here now at this moment, they have come by astral travel, and some of them occupy human bodies such as did the Ancients of Old.

Humans, if they knew how, could send astral travelers anywhere transcending time and space. Astral travel can be as quick as thought, and if you don't know how quick thought is I will tell you—it would take a tenth of a second to go from here to Mars by astral travel. But in days to come explorers will be able to go to a world by astral travel and there, by transmigration, they will be able to enter the body of a native of that world

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so that they may gain first hand experience of what things are like. Now, this is not science fiction. It is absolutely true. If other people on other worlds can do it, then Earth people can do it also. But sadly I have to say that purely because of the false doubt which has been cast upon my word this particular aspect has not been able to be taught to people.

Unfortunately when one takes over a body there are certain grave disabilities. Let me give you an illustration; I found soon after I had taken over a body that I could not write Sanskrit, I could not write Chinese. Oh yes, definitely I knew the language, I knew what I should be writing, but—the body which I inhabited was not “geared” for making those squiggles which are Sanskrit or Chinese.

It was only able to reproduce, say, letters such as English, French, German or Spanish. It is all to do with muscular control. You have had the same things even in the West when you find that a well educated German with a better education than most English, let us say, still cannot pronounce English as the natives do. He cannot “get his tongue around” the sounds.

So no matter how highly he is educated he still cannot say the sounds correctly. It is said almost universally that you can always tell if a man is a native of a district or not by the manner in which he pronounces his words, that is, can he manage his vocal chords as the native would, or does habit bring in certain dissonances which the native lacks.

In transferring to a different body one can do all the sounds, etcetera, because the body is producing sounds to which it is accustomed, English, French or Spanish, for example. But when it comes to writing that is a different matter.

Look at it this way; some people can draw or they can paint. So let us say that these people—the artists—have an ability to produce certain squiggles which have a definite meaning. Now, most people, even of the same race, cannot do that, and even with training—even with immense practice—unless a person is a “born artist” the art forms are not considered acceptable. The same type of thing happens when an Eastern entity takes over a Western body. He can communicate in speech and he can know all that could be done in writing, but no longer can he write in that which was his original language such as Sanskrit or Chinese or Japanese because it takes years of practice, and his attempts are so fumbling, so crude, that the ideographs have no intelligible meaning.

Another difficulty is that the entity is Eastern and the body or vehicle is Western. If you find that strange let me say that if you were in England you would be driving a car with right hand controls so that you may drive on the left hand side of the road, but if you are in America you drive a car in which the steering wheel is on the left hand side, and then you drive on the right hand side of the road.

Everyone knows that, eh? Well, you take some poor wretch of a driver who has been used to driving along the lanes of England, suddenly lift him out and put the poor soul slap into an American car and without any teaching at all let him loose on the American roads. The poor fellow wouldn't have much chance, would he? He wouldn't last long. All his built-in reflexes which may have been trained for half a lifetime would scream at

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having to be reversed suddenly, and in the emergency he would immediately drive to the wrong side of the road and cause the accident which he was trying to avoid. Do you follow that clearly? Believe me, I know this, it all happened to me. So transmigration is not for the uninitiated. I say in all sincerity, there could be a lot done in transmigration if people could get the right knowledge, and I am surprised that the Russians who are so far ahead in so many things have not yet hit upon the idea of transmigration. It is easy—if you know how. It is easy—if you can have suitable precautions. But if you try to teach these things, as I could, and you have a lot of mindless children, or press people, then the whole thing becomes negated almost before one can start.

Another point which has to be considered is obtaining a suitable vehicle or body, because you cannot just jump into any body and take over like a bandit entering a car stopped at a traffic light. Oh no, it is much harder than that. You have to find a body which is harmonious to your own, which has a harmonic somewhere, and it doesn't mean to say that the owner of the body has to be good or bad, that has nothing to do with it at all; it is to do with the vibrational frequency of that body.

If you are interested in radio you will know that you can have, let us say, a super-heterodyne receiver which has three tuning condensers. Now if the set is working properly you get one station clearly, but as you get on harmonics you actually pick up the same signal on different wavelengths or different frequencies—it is all the same thing. In a frequency one just counts the number of times the wave changes from positive to negative, etcetera. But when you take a wavelength you just measure the distance between adjacent wave-crests. It is the same as calling a rose by another name, but what I am trying to tell you is, is it possible, but it is going to be an everyday thing in the distant future here on Earth.

But back to Thames Ditton. It was quite a nice little place, one of the suburbs of the great city of London. I believe it is also called one of the dormitories of London. There were a number of trees in the place, and every morning one could see businessmen scurrying away to Thames Ditton station where they would get a train taking them to Wimbledon and other parts of London so they could do their daily work. Many of the men were from the City of London, stockbrokers, insurance men, bankers, and all the rest of it. Where I lived was right opposite the Cottage Hospital. Much further on to the right one came to a sort of sports ground, and adjacent to the sports ground was a big building called the Milk Marketing Board.

Thames Ditton was “better class” and some of the voices I could hear through my open window were too much “better class” because I found some of the heavily accented voices difficult indeed to understand.

But speech was not easy for me. I had to think before I could utter a sound, and then I had to visualize the shape of the sound I was trying to say. Speech to most people comes naturally. You can babble forth without any difficulty, without any great thought, but not when you are an Easterner who has taken over a Western body. Even to this day I have to think what I am going to say, and that makes my speech appear somewhat slow and at times hesitant.

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If one takes over a body, for the first year or two the body is basically the body of the host, that is, it was taken over. But in the course of time the body frequency changes and eventually it becomes of the same frequency as one's original body, and one's original scars appear. It is, as I told you before, like electroplating or like electrotyping because molecule changes for molecule. This should not be too difficult to believe because if you get a cut and the cut heals then you've got replacement molecules, haven't you? They are not the same molecules that were cut but new cells that were grown to replace the cut ones.

It is something like that in transmigration. The body ceases to be the alien body taken over, instead molecule by molecule it becomes one's own body, the body which one has grown.

Just one last piece of information about transmigration. It makes one "different." It gives associates a peculiar feeling to be close to one, and if a transmigrated person touches another person unexpectedly that other person may squeak with shock and say, "Oh now you've given me goose pimples!" So if you want to practice transmigration you will have to consider the disadvantages as well as the advantages. You know how strange dogs sniff around each other, stiff-legged, waiting for the first move by the other?

Well, that is how I have found people in the Western world toward me. They do not understand me, they don't know what it is all about, they feel that there is something different and they do not know what it is, so often they will have uncertainty about me. They do not know if they like me or if they thoroughly dislike me, and it really does make difficulties, difficulties which are made manifest in the way that policemen are always suspicious of me, customs officials are always ready to believe the worst, and immigration officers always want to inquire further as to why, how, and when, etcetera, etcetera. It makes one, in effect, unacceptable to "the local natives." But we must get on to the next Book, but before we do here is a final word in case you find it difficult to understand that which I have written about Easterners who have transmigrated being able to write their own language; if you are right-handed write this paragraph with your right hand, then try to do the same thing with your left!

So ends the third book, The Book of Changes.

BOOK FOUR

As it is Now!

CHAPTER TEN

Sunlight glanced off the placid river sailing so majestically by, sweeping along down to the sea like the Akashic Record sweeping along down to the sea of Universal Knowledge. But here THIS river was engaging my attention. I looked through half-closed eyes at all the little sparklets, at the dappled surface as occasionally a leaf went floating by. There was a sudden rustle and flutter, and three water birds alighted with great splashing on the surface of the water. For some moments they splashed around, throwing water

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over themselves, digging beneath their wings and generally having a good avian time. Then, as if at a sudden signal, they spread their wings, paddled their feet and took off in formation leaving three increasing circles of ripples behind them.

Sunlight through the leaves of the trees put contrasting spots of light and shadow on the waters edge before me. The sun was warm. I lay back and became aware of a buzzing noise. Slowly I opened my eyes and there right in front of my nose was a bee looking at me with great interest. Then, as if deciding that I would not be a suitable source of nectar, or whatever it is that bees seek; it buzzed the louder and veered off to some flower sheltering in the shade of a tree. I could hear it droning away there as it busily probed into the flower, and then it came out backwards and I saw that its legs and body were covered in yellow pollen.

It was pleasant here, reclining beneath the trees by the side of the river Thames at Thames Ditton, facing the great Palace of Hampton Court. My attention wandered and I suppose I dozed. Whatever it was I suddenly became aware of a noise in the distance. I had visions of the Royal Barge coming down from the Tower of London and carrying Queen Elizabeth the First with her then-favorite boy- friend and the retinue of servants which seemed inevitable in royal circles.

There was music aboard the Royal Barge, and it seemed incongruous to me to have such music when coming up the Thames, but I could hear the splashing of oars, and the creaking of oarlocks. There was much giggling and I thought to myself in my half-sleep state that surely people in early Elizabethan days did not behave as modern teenagers so.

I opened my eyes and there just coming around the bend was a large punt filled with teenagers and with a gramophone aboard as well as a radio, both were blaring out different tunes. They rowed along chattering away, everyone seemed to be talking on a different subject, no one was taking any notice of anyone else. They went along past Hampton Court and disappeared from my sight, and for a time again all was peace.

I thought again of the great Queen Elizabeth and of her journeys from the Tower of London to Hampton Court; nearly opposite to where I lay on the bank was the site where they used to have a landing jetty. The rowers used to come close and then ropes would be thrown and the Barge pulled in gently so as not to upset the Queens balance because she was not a very good sailor, not even on the Thames! Hampton Court itself was a place that I found fascinating. I visited it often, and even under some unusual conditions, and I could see clearly that the place was indeed haunted with the spirits of those whose bodies had so long ago departed.

But there was much talking going on behind me, and I turned round and saw four people there. "Oh my goodness," said a woman, "you were so still—you haven't moved for the last ten minutes—that we thought you were dead!" With that they moved on, talking and talking and talking. The world, I thought, had too much noise, everyone had too much talk and too little to say. With that thought in mind I glanced about me. There were a few boats on the river Thames in front of me. Just down to the left of me was an old man who looked as if he might have been Father Time himself. He was stuck there like an old

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tree trunk. He had a pipe in his mouth and a faint haze of smoke was coming from it. Tied to a stick in front of him he had a fishing rod, the float of which—red and white—bobbed about just in front of me. I watched him for a short time, he didn't move either, and I wondered what people really saw in fishing. I came to the conclusion that it was just an excuse on the part of some elderly people so that they could keep still and meditate, think of the past, and wonder what the future held for them.

The future? I looked at my watch in alarm, and then hurried to get to my feet and mount the old bicycle which had been lying beside me on the bank. With more haste than usual I pedaled off down the road and around to the right, and so on the way to West Molesey where the Unemployment Exchange was.

But no, there was no employment for me, no offer of a job. It seemed there were too many people and too few jobs, and as one man told me so bluntly, "Well mate, you left your job and you didn't have to, so as you left it and you didn't have to, you don't get paid nothing, see. So it stands to reason that the government ain't going to pay a fellow what left 'is job because he had a job before he left it, so you won't get no dole, and so long as you don't get no dole this here Exchange won't get you no job. The Exchange keeps its jobs for those who've got dole because if they get the fellow a job they don't have to pay him dole and so their statistics look better."

I tried commercial employment agencies, those places where you go and pay money, and where in theory they find you a job. My own experience may have been particularly unfortunate, but in spite of trying quite a number none of them ever offered me a job.

I managed to get just odd things to do around Thames Ditton and the district. I was able to do certain medical work which the orthodox physician could not do or would not do and I thought—well, I am a fully qualified medical man and I've got the papers to prove it so why don't I try to get registered in England?

Sometime later I approached the General Medical Council unofficially. Actually I went to their place and told them all about it. They told me that—yes, I had all the qualifications but unfortunately Chungking was now in the hands of the Communists and, they said, I just could not expect my qualifications to be recognized as they were obtained in a Communist country.

I produced my papers, and shoved it straight under the Secretary's nose. I said, "Look, when these papers were prepared China was not a Communist country, it was an ally of England, France, the U.S.A., and many other countries. I fought for peace just the same as people in England fought for peace, and just because I was in a different country does not mean to say that I haven't got feelings the same as you have." He hummed and hawed and grunted around, and then he said, "Come back in a month's time. We'll see what can be arranged. Yes, yes, I quite agree, your qualifications are such that they should be recognized. The only thing impeding such recognition is that Chungking is now a city in a Communist country."

So I left his office and went to the Hunterian Museum to look at all the specimens in

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bottles, and I thought then how amazing it was that humans everywhere were— humans everywhere, they all functioned in roughly the same way and yet if a person was trained in one country he was not considered qualified to treat people in a different country. It was all beyond me.

But jobs were difficult indeed to obtain, and the cost of living at Thames Ditton was quite excessive. I found that as a married man, which in theory I was, expenses were far, far more than when I had to manage alone.

At this stage of the book perhaps I might take a moment to answer some of those people who write to me horribly offensively asking why should I, a lama of Tibet, live with a woman—have a wife. Well, all you “ladies” who write so offensively let me tell you this; I am still a monk, I still live as a monk, and possibly some of you “ladies” have indeed heard of celibate bachelors who have a landlady or a sister with whom they live without necessarily thinking of THAT! So “ladies,” the answer is, no, I don't!

But the time had come to leave Thames Ditton, and we moved nearer into London because by my own efforts I had made a job available for myself. I came to the conclusion that as the body that I now occupied was living “overtime” there were no opportunities for it. The former occupant of the body, I saw by the Akashic Record, really and truly had been going to commit suicide, and that would have completed all the opportunities which his vehicle, his body, would have had. Thus, no matter how hard I tried I could never take a job which another person could do; the only employment that I could take would be that which I generated for myself. Now, I don't propose to say what employment that was, nor where I did it because it is nothing to do with this story, but it proved to be adequate to supply our immediate wants and to keep us going. But I must tell you one thing which irritated me immensely, again it was connected with my old enemies the police. I was driving through South Kensington with an anatomical figure in the back of a car. It was one of those figures which appear in dress shops or which are sometimes provided for the training of surgical fitters. This figure was in the back of the car, and when I had started out it had been covered up with cloth but I drove with the window open and I suppose the draught had blown part of the cloth off the figure.

I was driving along quite peacefully thinking of what I was going to do next when suddenly there was a loud blare beside me, which nearly made me jump through the roof. I looked in the mirror and I found two figures gesticulating at me, pointing me to pull in to the side of the road. There were a lot of cars parked at the side of the road so I drove in a little to try to find a place where I could stop. The next thing was, this police car—for such it was—tried to ram me thinking, they said, that I was attempting to escape—at fifteen miles an hour in traffic!

Well, I stopped just where I was, holding up the traffic, and I couldn't care less about how cross the people in the other cars were, so I just stopped there. The police motioned for me to get out and come to them, but I thought—no, they want to see me, I don't want to see them, so I just sat. Eventually one policeman got out with his truncheon all ready in his hand. He looked as if he was going to face a firing squad or something, he really did look frightened. Slowly he came up to my side of the car walking more or less

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sideways presumably to make less of a target in case I started shooting. Then he looked into the back of the car and turned a bright red.

“Well, officer, what is it? What am I supposed to have done?” I asked him. The policeman looked at me and he really did look silly, he looked absolutely sheepish. “I’m sorry, sir,” he said, “but we were told that a man was driving around and a naked woman’s legs were showing through the back window.”

I reached in to the back and pulled the cloth right off the figure, and then I said, “Well, officer, show me any sign of life in this model. Show me how she has been killed. Take a good look at her.” And then I covered the figure more carefully. The policeman went back to his car and all the cars behind us were hooting away as if they were trying to fill a concert hall or something. Feeling thoroughly bad tempered I drove off.

There was another occasion with the police which may raise a smile; I had an office in London and it was very near an underground tube station. My wife often used to come and visit me round about lunch time, and when she was leaving I used to look out of the window just to see that she safely crossed that busy London street.

One day I was just getting ready to finish up and go home when there was a loud official knock at the door. I got up and went to the door and there were two very large policemen. One said, “We want to know what you are doing here.” I turned and let them come into my office.

He looked about with interest and his associate got ready to act as witness. Everywhere the chief policeman looked his associate looked also.

I invited them to be seated, but no, they would not be seated, they were there on official business they told me. They said they thought I was engaged in some illicit activity and that I was giving signals to some gang.

This really shocked me, in fact I was almost stunned with amazement, and I just could not understand what they were talking about. “Whatever do you mean?” I exclaimed. The chief policeman said, “Well, it has been reported to us that you make strange signals at about midday and we have kept watch and we have seen those strange signals. To whom are you signaling?”

Then it dawned on me and I started to laugh. I said, “Oh good God, whatever is the world coming to? I am merely waving to my wife when I watch to see that she crosses the road safely and enters the tube station.”

He said in reply, “That cannot be so, you cannot see the station from here.” Without another word I got up from my chair, opened the window which was just to my right, and said, “Look and see for yourself.” They looked at each other and then together they went to the window and looked out. Sure enough, just as I said, there was the underground station opposite. They both changed color a bit, and I said—to make them change color a bit more—“Oh yes, I’ve seen you two fellows, you were in that block of flats opposite, I saw you trying to hide behind the curtains. I wondered what you were up to.”

The chief policeman then said, “You occupy the floor beneath this office. We have

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information that you are engaged in sexual activities in that flat below.” I had had enough of this, and I said, “All right, come downstairs with me and see all the naked females for yourself.” They were not at all happy with my attitude and they wondered what they had done wrong.

Together we went down a flight of stairs and I unlocked a big showroom, the windows of which were heavily curtained with expensive lace net. Above the curtained windows there were small ventilators about a foot square which, of course, were not curtained.

I went to one lay figure and picked it up, and said, “Look, if a person is carrying this around, putting it from here to here”—I demonstrated— “a prying nosey-parker of an old woman who lives in that flat opposite might think it is a nude body.”

I rapped on the figures and said, “All right, take a look at them, do they look obscene to you?”

The policemen changed their tune completely, and the senior one said, “Well, I am sorry you have been troubled, sir, I really am most sorry, but we received a complaint from the sister of a very senior police officer saying that strange things are happening here. We are quite satisfied with what we have seen. You will not be troubled again.”

Well, I was! I had to go to my office one evening at about seven o'clock and I unlocked the doors and went in, as I had a perfect right to do. I did the bit of work that I had to do, and then left. As I locked the door behind me two policemen seized me quite roughly and tried to hustle me to a police car. But I knew my rights and I asked for an immediate explanation. They told me that it had been reported (yes, it was the same woman!) that a sinister looking man (that's me!) had been seen to break into the building, so they were waiting for me. They would not believe that I had a right to be there, so I unlocked the office again and we went in, and I had actually to call the estate agent who had rented me the place, and he identified me by my voice. Once again the police looked silly and departed without a word.

Soon after that I decided that there was no point in staying in such an office where it was obvious that the old biddy opposite had nothing better to do with her time than imagine that she was a policewoman reporting all manner of imaginary criminal offences. So I left that office and went elsewhere.

Again, I did certain psychological work among people who could get no assistance from orthodox medicine and I did quite well, I really did. I cured a number of people but then one day there was a man who tried to blackmail me.

So I learned that unless one was actually registered one was too much at the mercy of people who would gladly get all the assistance they could and then try to blackmail one.

But the blackmailer—well, he didn't get his way after all! Just at this time a young lady came into our life, came into our life of her own accord, of her own free will. We

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regarded her as a daughter and still do, and she is still with us. But her destiny, she felt, was such that she had to live with us, and that she did. Later the press were to make much of this, trying to say that it was a case of the eternal triangle; nothing could have been firmer than the truth. We were standing "on the square" instead of "in the eternal triangle."

At about this time I was introduced to an authors' agent. I thought I was going to get a job with him reading and commenting upon authors' typescripts, but no, he knew a bit of my story and very very much against my own will I allowed myself to be persuaded into writing a book. One cannot be too particular when starvation is just around the corner, you know, and starvation wasn't just around the corner, it was knocking hard on the door.

So I wrote a book, and then certain authors who were jealous at my knowledge of Tibet tried to trace me up. They got all manner of detective agencies, and one agency indeed put an advertisement in either The Times or The Telegraph of London advertising for Lobsang Rampa; he should write to such-and-such an address where something very good was waiting for him.

I knew this was a catch, and so I told my agent, Mr. Cyrus Brooks. He got his son-in-law to phone to see what it was all about. Yes, it was indeed a catch. An author in Germany was mightily peeved that I had written about Tibet when he thought that was his own private inviolable province, and so he tried to have me traced up so that he could decide what action he could take against me.

At about this time people connected with the young lady who was living with us took a dislike thinking that I had led her astray—I hadn't—and they also had a private detective trying to find out about me. But this poor fellow—well, it seems to me that he wasn't very bright, he never even tried to get in contact with me. I wonder if he was afraid or something. But instead of asking me outright as a man he relied on hearsay evidence, and as anyone should know, hearsay evidence is not legal evidence is it?

But the two sides came together and they went to some press reporter who wasn't very popular with his fellows. They tried a few traps which I saw through, but when later we had moved to Ireland these people made a great campaign against me in the press, saying that I was doing black magic rites in the bottom of the house, that I had a secret temple; that I was guilty of all manner of sex orgies, etcetera, and that at some time in my career I had been in trouble with the police. Well, that was easy, I had always been in trouble with the police, but I had never been charged with anything, and I had never truly done anything worth police attention. But there is no point in stirring up old troubles and raking up ashes which should be burned out, but I want here to pay testimony to the husband of the young lady. He was and is a gentleman, he is a very good man, he is still our friend, and as he well knew and, indeed, as he testified, the statements about me were quite quite wrong.

No, I am saying no more about this, nothing about the press, nothing about the relatives of the young lady. She is still with us, still with us as a loved daughter. So there you are, that's all there is to that.

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When all this happened we had moved to Ireland, and one thing and another had conspired to ruin my health. I had coronary thrombosis, and it was thought that I was going to die, but the press made life so hideous that we had to leave Ireland, which we did with extreme reluctance. I had many friends there, and I still have those selfsame friends.

We left Ireland and went to Canada where we are now. We moved about Canada quite a lot, we went to different cities, went to different provinces. But at last we had a letter in the mail which offered a lot.

In the mail one day there came quite a thick letter. The stamps were from a country of which I knew—at that time remarkably little. It was from Uruguay, the country in South America which rests between Argentina and Brazil.

The letter was interesting. It told me that the writer was the head of a big company where they did printing, book publishing—everything. I was asked to go to Montevideo at the expense of that company, and I could continue my work there, I would be provided with secretaries, typists, translation services—in fact everything that I wanted. The writer sent me a photograph of himself looking quite impressive behind a big desk with an I.B.M. typewriter in front of him, a lot of books behind him, and, I think, a Phillips dictating machine there as well.

We discussed it, “we” being my wife and our adopted daughter, and after quite a time we thought that it would be a good idea. So we made all the necessary inquiries and at long last, because formalities took a time, we got on a train at Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada, for the trip to New York. We were told that we were going to be passengers aboard a Moore McCormack freighter, one which normally took twelve passengers.

In New York everything, as usual, was bustle and commotion. We stayed the night at one of the big hotels and the next morning we set off for the Moore McCormack dock in New York Harbor, and I was highly amused when I found that that dock was one right opposite the one to which I had made my swim so many years ago, it seemed. However, I said nothing, because there is not much point in raking up bitter memories, but, I confess, I kept quite a look out for river police.

We went aboard the ship and found our staterooms, and so late that night with four locomotives loaded aboard on the deck we steamed away to first Vittoria in Brazil. There we went up a long inlet before we arrived at a very picturesque, very hot little community. That was our first port of call. Then we went down to a place nearby so that the locomotives—they were diesel locomotives for the Brazilian railroads—could be unloaded.

There were two or three more stops in Brazil until we were cleared for Montevideo in Uruguay. But as we approached Montevideo, actually we were at Punta del Este, the Captain was informed by radio that we could not land in Montevideo because there was a dock strike on, so we went to Buenos Aires first and we stayed in that port for about a week. It was quite a busy port, and we saw an enormous number of foreign ships come in. German ones seemed to be the most popular ones, and quite a lot of ships, it seemed,

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were going straight up the river which forms the frontier between Argentina and Uruguay. We were told that a few miles further up there was a great meat packing plant, the plant of Fray Bentos.

At last, though, we were cleared to leave port and down we went along the Rio de Plata, and at long last we came to Montevideo, our destination. We got into the outer harbor and the ship had to drop anchor. There had been a strike and a whole fleet of ships was assembled, and they had to be attended to first because they were there first, so we stayed aboard ship for about a week. At last the ship was allowed to enter harbor and we went ashore.

Our hopes were completely dashed, however, because we found that the man with an immense business did not have such an immense business after all. Instead—well, to put it at its kindest, he was a man with ideas which did not always work out.

It was very expensive living in Montevideo. They seemed to have a peculiar idea there that everything had to be paid for in American dollars so, in effect, taking into consideration the rate of exchange, we were paying fantastic sums for even basic items. However we stayed there for a year and a half, then we found there were all manner of strikes and increasing restrictions on foreigners, so we decided to leave.

It is most unfortunate that we had to leave because Montevideo was a nice place indeed. The people for the most part—except for the strikers!—were very pleasant, very courteous, and it was like being in a European city. It was a beautiful city with a wonderful harbor and beaches.

For a very short time we stayed at a place called Carrasco, quite near the airport. This had one terrible defect in that very fine sand from the immense beaches was always getting blown into the houses, so as we were also too far from the city centre we moved to an apartment building which overlooked the lighthouse.

A few miles out in the approaches to the harbor there was a wrecked ship. It had been a quite large passenger liner and for some reason the ship had been sunk just off the main entrance, and there it remained. At low tide one could just see the main deck, at high tide the bridge and the bridge deck was still above water. We saw quite a lot of smuggling going on here because the ship was used as a “drop” for smugglers.

There were many beautiful sights in Montevideo including a high eminence just across the other side of the harbor. This was known as “the Mountain” and there was a sort of fort, which was a local tourist attraction, right at its peak.

The British had done much to modernize Montevideo. They had started its bus service, and they had also started the gas works, and one of the advantages of that was that so many people had a smattering of English.

One day when we had moved to yet another apartment closer into the city centre the sky turned black and for a time everything turned bitterly cold. Then there came a cyclone. Three of us struggled to close our open window and as we were there congregated, pushing our shoulders hard against the window, we saw an amazing sight indeed;

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the bus station roof just below us suddenly vanished, all the sheets of corrugated iron were flying through the air as if they were made of tissue paper. We looked down and saw all the buses there and workers were gazing up wide-mouthed and with wide eyes.

A really amusing sight—for us—was when hens, which had been kept on the flat roofs of houses in Montevideo were blown straight up in the air and crossed street after street in probably the only flight they ever had in their lives. It really is an astonishing sight to see hens go flying by with their wings tight to their sides!

A sight which really made me amused was when a whole clothes line laden with newly-washed clothes went sailing by. The line was as tight and as stiff as an iron bar, and sheets and “unmentionables” were hanging straight down as if in still air. I have seen many cyclones, whirlwinds, etcetera, but this from my point of view was quite the most amusing.

But Montevideo was losing its charm, so we decided to return to Canada because of the various groups of Communists who were making trouble. In many ways I am sorry for it because I think I would rather live in Uruguay than in most other places. They have a different mentality there. They call themselves the Oriental Republic of Uruguay. It is a poor country with wonderful ideals, but ideals so idealistic that they were impractical.

We returned to Canada by sea, and then there was the question of making money so I had to write another book. My health was deteriorating a lot, and that was the only thing I could do.

During my absence I found that a person had written a book on material I had written for an English magazine some years previously. He was a very peculiar sort of person, whenever he was tackled or threatened with a law case he conveniently went bankrupt and friends or relatives “bought” his business, so there was not much redress, in fact there was none.

One of the big troubles I have had since “the Third Eye” is the number of people who write “Approved by Lobsang Rampa,” and just put labels to that effect on the goods they supply. All that is quite intense; I do not “approve” things. Many people, too, have impersonated me, in fact, on quite a number of occasions I have had to call in the police. There was, for example, a man in Miami who wrote to a bookseller in San Francisco in my name, he actually signed my name. He wrote a lot of “Holy Joe” stuff, which I never do, and he ordered a lot of books to be sent to him. Quite by chance I wrote to the bookseller at the same time from Vancouver and he was so amazed at getting a letter apparently from me and in British Columbia that he wrote to me and asked how I was moving so quickly. So it came out that this fellow had been for some time ordering goods in my name and not paying. As I said, if anyone is fool enough to take as “me” the gobbledygook that this fellow had been writing deserves to get caught.

There have been others such as the man who retired to a mountain cave, sat cross-legged with darn little clothing on him, and pretended to be me. He advised teenagers to have sex and drugs, saying that it was good for them. But the press, of course, seized on such incidents and made quite a commotion, and even when it was proved that these

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impostors were impersonating me the press never got round to reporting the actuality of what happened. I am utterly, utterly, utterly opposed to suicide. I am utterly, utterly opposed to drugs, and I am utterly, utterly opposed to the press. I think that the average pressman is not fitted to report things on metaphysics or the occult, they do not have the knowledge, they do not have the spirituality, and, in my opinion, they just do not have the brain power.

After a time in Fort Erie, to which we returned from South America, we went to Prescott, Ontario, where we lived in a small hotel. The Manager of that hotel was an extremely fine man indeed. We stayed there a year, and during the whole of that year there was never at any time the slightest disagreement or slightest lack of harmony between “management” and us. His name was Ivan Miller, and he was a real gentleman and I wish I knew his address now to again express my appreciation of all the efforts he made. He was a great big man, huge in fact, and he had been a wrestler, yet he could be more gentle than most women.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

It was good to be back in Canada to get what was then a reliable mail service. There had been quite a lot of trouble in Uruguay and one particular incident which really made me foam with fury was when, as an author, I had a lot of mail sent to me and the post office in Montevideo would not let me have it. I had my adopted name, and I also had the name under which I wrote, T. Lobsang Rampa, and the post office officials in Montevideo were quite adamant in not letting me have mail for two names. Their idea was that a person must be a crook if they had to have two names, and so I gave the matter much thought and came to the conclusion that I was far better known as T. Lobsang Rampa. Then I went to the post office and said I wanted the mail for T. Lobsang Rampa and they could retrain the rest.

Then they had to see my papers. My papers had the wrong name on them, so I was unable to get my mail.

Eventually I had to go to a lawyer—an “abogado”—and have a Change of Name Deed drawn up. It had to be done legally, and there were many many stamps on the document, after which notice had to be given in an Uruguayan legal newspaper all about the name change. When all those formalities were completed then I could get mail in the name of T. Lobsang Rampa but I was forbidden to use the other name. .

Now, of course, my name has been legally changed in Canada as well to T. Lobsang Rampa, and while we are on the subject of officialdom, bureaucracy, etcetera I am now a Canadian subject. I took out Canadian naturalization and, here again, the formalities were truly amazing.

But there seem to be formalities in everything nowadays, I have been trying to get the Old Age Pension, to which I am entitled, but bureaucracy is such that apparently I cannot get it—or so the officials tell me unless I give the exact address and the exact dates of arriving and leaving every place I have been in Canada. Well, I have been to an

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amazing number of places from Windsor to Prescott, to Montreal, Saint John, New Brunswick, Halifax, all the way on to Vancouver back to Calgary, etcetera, and I should have thought that I was well enough known as a Canadian citizen and with a passport, etcetera, but apparently that does not suit the bureaucracy—mad officials. So the matter is “still pending.” It sounds more like a rotten apple than anything else, doesn't it?

Last night I was very unwell indeed and late in the night I awakened from an uneasy doze and found clustered around me a group of those who were my associates, lamas from Tibet. They were in the astral, and they were agitating for me to get out of the body and go over and discuss things with them. “What is the matter with you all?” I asked. “If I feel any worse than I do now I shall be over there permanently.” The Lama Mingyar Dondup smiled and said, “Yes, that's what we are afraid of. We want you to do something else first.”

When one has done astral travel for as many years as I have there is nothing to it, it is easier than stepping out of bed, so I just slipped out of this body and went into the astral. Together we walked to the side of a lake on which there were many water birds playing. Here in the astral, you know, creatures have no fear whatever of Man, so these birds were simply playing in the water. We sat on a moss-covered bank, and my Guide said, “You know, Lobsang, there isn't enough detail given about transmigration. We wanted you to say something about peoples who have used transmigration.” Well, the day in the astral was too pleasant to be much of a cross-patch, so I indicated that on the morrow I would get to work again before the book was finished.

It was very pleasant, though, being in the astral, away from pain, away from worries and all the rest of it. But, as I was reminded, people do not go to Earth for pleasure, they go because they have something to learn or something to teach.

Today, then, is another day, the day when I have to write something even more about transmigration. In the days of Atlantis and—oh yes!—there really was Atlantis, it is not just a figment of a writer's imagination; Atlantis was real. But, in the days of Atlantis there was a very high civilization indeed. People “walked with Gods.”

The Gardeners of the Earth were ever watching developments on Atlantis. But those who are watched are wary of the watchers, and so it came about that the Gardeners of the Earth used the process of transmigration so that they could keep a more subtle form of watch.

A number of bodies of suitable vibrations were used by the spirits of Gardeners, and then they could mingle with humans and find out just what the humans really thought of the Gardeners and were they plotting. The Gardeners of the Earth who looked after that mysterious civilization known as the Sumerians also had tutors come to the Earth by transmigration. It was altogether too slow to have great space ships cross the void taking such a long time. By transmigration it could be done in a matter of seconds.

The Egyptians, also, were largely controlled and entirely taught by higher Entities who entered into specially cultivated bodies, and when those bodies were not actually being used by the Entities they were carefully cleaned, wrapped up, and put aside

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in stone boxes. The ignorant Egyptian natives catching brief glances of the ceremonies came to the conclusion that the Gardeners were preserving the bodies, and so those who had witnessed such proceedings rushed home to their priests and told all that they had seen.

The priests then thought that they would try such things, and when a high enough person died they wrapped him up in bandages, coated him with spices, and all the rest of it, but they found that the bodies decayed. Then they came to the conclusion that it was the intestines, the heart, liver and lungs which caused the decaying, so all those parts were removed and put in separate jars. It is a good thing they were not preparing the hosts for incoming spirits because the hosts would indeed have been a gutless lot, wouldn't they?!

Of course, some of the embalming—so called—was when a sick space man or space woman was being put into the state of suspended animation so that he or she could be removed to a space ship and taken elsewhere for treatment.

There have been quite a number of well-known leaders on this Earth who were Entities transmigrated into Earth-bodies, Abraham, Moses, Gautama, Christ, and then that well-known genius of geniuses, Leonardo da Vinci. The inventions of Leonardo da Vinci are legend, and he enhanced the knowledge of this world very very greatly. He, as I suppose anyone would agree, possessed skills and sciences far beyond the knowledge of Earth people. The person known as Leonardo da Vinci had been an illegitimate child without any special advantages. Who knows?

He might even have been the son of a plumber! The body of the person who became Leonardo da Vinci was of such a degree of vibration that a very high Entity could take it over and do all those things which no human could have done.

In all seriousness, I say that if the people of this world would only listen to those who can actually do transmigration there would be a wonderful chance of space exploration. Think of all the worlds there are. Think of being able to visit a world in a matter of seconds. Some of the worlds can never be visited by orthodox humans because the atmosphere may be wrong, the climate may be wrong, or the gravity may be wrong. But when a person is doing transmigration he can take over the body of any native of the planet, and so then can explore the planet without any difficulties whatever.

Humans, well versed in the science of transmigration could enter the bodies of animals so that they could be studied effectively. This has been done before, it has been done frequently before, and because of a racial memory there are certain false beliefs that humans are reborn as animals. They are not—ever. Nor are animals born as humans. Animals are not inferior to humans, either. But because there is a racial memory of Gardeners of the Earth taking over the bodies of certain animals, the knowledge of that has lingered on in a distorted form.

Thus it is that good religions are debased. We have traveled extensively in Canada. I have been from Windsor, Ontario, to Fort Erie and on to Prescott, and then we went to Saint John, N.B. For a time, as you can read in others of my books, we lived quite happily

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in New Brunswick, in the very pleasant city beside the sea.

But as my accountant said, an author must travel, so we moved to Montreal and we lived in Habitat for some time. Habitat is that funny looking collection of houses piled one on top of the other like children's building bricks. Anyway, it was quite a nice place to live, and in fact we liked it so much that after we had left it we later returned to it. Here again, in Montreal there were always strikes, there was a language difficulty, too, because the French-Canadians were not at all friendly to those who did not speak French, and my own firm opinion has always been that Canada was an English speaking country and I refused to speak French.

Soon came the time when we moved again, this time to Vancouver, British Columbia, where we lived in a hotel, actually a hotel which also had apartments to it. Vancouver has gone down a lot lately under what I consider to be a most horrible form of government. And another complaint against Vancouver is that "no pets" was the sign everywhere, and as one hotel keeper once said, pets had never hurt his business but children had and so had drunks and so had people who smoked in bed and set the place on fire.

I have moved about a lot in my life. I have learned much, and there are certain things I "wish" could be—I wish, for instance, that there could be a censorship of the press because I have seen so much misery caused by inaccurate press reports. I am glad to note that now many many more people are obviously agreeing with me on this, because the accuracy of the press is often in doubt nowadays.

The predictions made about me so very very long ago have been utterly accurate. It was predicted that even my own people would turn against me. Well, they have—they have indeed, because in my time of trouble no one came forward to help me or to attest the truth of my story, and true that story is.

I had so many hopes about helping Tibet. I thought, for example, that with recognition I would be able to speak for Tibet before the United Nations. I hoped that with recognition I could have had a radio program about free Tibet, but no, no help whatever has been given to me by the people of Tibet who have left that country. Sadly enough it is their loss as well as mine. So much good could have been done. My name is widely known, it has been conceded that I can write, it has been stated also that I can talk. I wanted to use both in the service of Tibet, yet they have not been at all anxious to recognize me, just the same as in the past a Dalai Lama would not recognize the Panchen Lama and vice versa. It is just the same, we will say, as one political leader ignoring the existence of another. But I get a vast number of letters, on this day, for example, I had one hundred and three. It has often been much more, and the letters come from all over the world. I learn things which are closed to many, and I have been told, rightly or wrongly, that the present people who escaped from Tibet cannot "recognize" me because another religious faction who is helping them would be cross. I have all the evidence that that is so, actually. But—well—there is no point in starting a miniature religious war, is there?

It is mainly the lower orders of refugees who seem to be opposed to me. I had a letter some months ago from an important man who had been to see the Dalai Lama and

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had discussed me. The Dalai Lama, it was reported to me, had extended an invitation to me to return to the Potala when it was freed from Communist aggression.

And just a few weeks back our adopted daughter (we “name no names,” remember?) received a letter saying that the Dalai Lama was very concerned about Dr. Rampa's health, and the Dalai Lama was praying for him daily. That letter is now in the possession of my publishers.

Another “wish” I have is this; there are quite a number of occult bodies about, some of them claiming to be very very ancient even though they were started again by an advertising man just a few years ago. But my complaint is this; if all these people are so holy—so good—so devoted to spiritual enlightenment then why cannot we all get together because if they are truly genuine they would realize that all paths lead Home.

A number of students from some of these cult-colleges have asked me why I did not get in touch with Group so-and-so or Group something else, and the answer is that I have done, and I have had some shockingly insulting replies from these groups all because they are jealous or because they have been poisoned by the press. Well, I do not see it that way at all. I maintain that it does not matter what religion one belongs to, it does not matter how one studies the occult. If people are genuine they would be able to work together.

Some years ago I was approached by a man who was the founder of a so-called Tibetan Science. He wrote to me and suggested that we could make a lot of money if I joined with him and he used my name. Well, I do not do things like that, I do not go in for this work as a money-making gimmick. My beliefs are my everyday beliefs and I live according to the code under which I was taught. I would like to see many of these so-called metaphysical societies or Orders licensed after careful examination. So many of them are fakes just out to gather money. I know of one particular group who admit quite freely that they take what they consider to be the best from a whole load of writers and hash it up as something quite different.

Well, that is dishonest.

This is a good opportunity to tell you once again—in case you start at the back end of this book instead of the front, as so many do—that all my books are absolutely true. Everything that I have written is fact. Every metaphysical experience I write about I can do, and it is my most sincere wish that there will come a time when people will indeed recognize the truth of my books because I still have a lot to teach people. Nowadays, because of the lies propagated by the press, I have been treated as a leper or pariah. Many people “dip into” my books and then write things as if it was their own idea. Some time ago I listened with great satisfaction on short waves to a long extract from one of my books, and then at the end of the reading I was almost stunned to hear that authorship has been ascribed to some woman who can hardly sign her name!

Believe me, then, all my books are true, and I believe I have the system whereby peoples of this world can visit other worlds in safety.

So ends Book Four, As It Is Now.

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I BELIEVE

CHAPTER ONE

MISS MATHILDA HOCKERSNICKLER of Upper Little Puddlepatch sat at her half opened window. The book she was reading attracted her whole attention. A funeral cortege went by without her shadow falling across the fine lace curtains adorning her windows. An altercation between two neighbors went unremarked by a movement of the aspidistra framing the center of the lower window. Miss Mathilda was reading.

Putting down the book upon her lap for a moment, she raised her steel-rimmed spectacles to her forehead while she rubbed at her red-rimmed eyes. Then, putting her spectacles back in place upon her rather prominent nose, she picked up the book and read some more.

In a cage a green and yellow parrot, beady-eyed, looked down with some curiosity. Then there was a raucous squawk, "Polly want out, Polly want out!"

Miss Mathilda Hockersnickler jumped to her feet with a start. "Oh, good gracious me," she exclaimed, "I am so sorry my poor little darling, I quite forgot to transfer you to your perch."

Carefully she opened the door of the gilt wire cage and, putting a hand inside, she lifted the somewhat tattered old parrot and gently drew him through the opened cage door.

"Polly want out, Polly want out!" squawked the parrot again.

"Oh, you stupid bird," replied Miss Mathilda. "You ARE out, I am going to put you on your perch." So saying, she put the parrot on the crossbar of a five foot pole which at its distal end resulted in a tray or catch-pan. Carefully she put a little chain around the parrot's left leg, and then made sure that the water bowl and the seed bowl at one end of the support were full.

The parrot ruffled its feathers and then put its head beneath one wing, making cooing chirping noises as it did so. "Ah, Polly," said Miss Mathilda, "you should come and read this book with me. It's all about the things we are when we are not here. I wish I knew what the author really believed," she said as she sat down again and very carefully and modestly arranged her skirts so that not even her knees were showing.

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She picked up the book again and then hesitated halfway between lap and reading position, hesitated and put the book down while she reached for a long knitting needle. And then with a vigor surprising in such an elderly lady—she gave a wholly delightful scratch all along her spine between the shoulder blades. "Ah!" she exclaimed, "what a wonderful relief that is. I am sure there is something wrong with my liberty bodice. I think I must have got a rough hair there, or something, let me scratch again, it's such a relief." With that she agitated the knitting needle vigorously, her face beaming with pleasure as she did so.

With that item behind her, and her itch settled for the moment, she replaced the knitting needle and picked up the book. "Death," she said to herself, or possibly to the unheeding parrot, "if I only knew what this author REALLY believed about after death."

She stopped for a moment and reached to the other side of the aspidistra bowl so that she could pick up some soft candies she had put there. Then with a sigh she got to her feet again and passed one to the parrot which was eyeing her very fiercely. The bird took it with a snap and held it in its beak.

Miss Mathilda, with the knitting needle now in one hand again and candy in her mouth and the book in her left hand, settled herself again and continued her reading.

A few lines on she stopped again. "Why is it that the Father always says that if one is not a good Catholic—a good Church-attending Catholic—one is not able to attain to the Kingdom of Heaven? I wonder if the Father is wrong and if people of other religions go to Heaven as well." She lapsed into silence again except for the faint mumbling that she made as she tried to visualize some of the more unfamiliar words. Akashic Record, astral travel, the Heavenly Fields.

The sun moved across the top of the house and Miss Mathilda sat and read. The parrot, with head beneath a wing, slept on. Only an infrequent twitch betrayed any sign of life.

Then a church clock chimed away in the distance and Miss Mathilda came to life with a jerk. "Oh my goodness me—oh my goodness me," she exclaimed, "I've forgotten all about tea and I have to go to the Church Women's Meeting." She jumped rapidly to her feet, and very carefully put an embroidered into the paperback book which she then hid beneath a sewing table.

She moved away to prepare her belated tea, and as she did so only the parrot would have heard her murmur, "Oh, I do wish I knew what this author really believed—I do wish I could have a talk with him. It would be such a comfort!"

On a far off sunny island which shall be nameless, although, indeed, it could be named for this is true, a Gentleman of Color stretched languorously beneath the ample shade of an age-old tree. Lazily he put down the book which he was reading and reached up for a luscious fruit which was dangling enticingly nearby. With an idle movement he plucked the fruit, inspected it to see that it was free of insects, and then popped it in his capacious mouth.

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"Gee," he mumbled over the obstruction of the fruit. "Gee, I sure doan know what this cat is getting at. I sure do wish I knew what he really believed." He stretched again and eased his back into a more comfortable position against the bole of the tree. Idly he swatted at a passing fly, missing he let his hand continue the motion and it idly picked up his book again.

"Life after death, astral travel, the Akashic Record." The Gentleman of Color rifled through some pages. He wanted to get to the end of the stuff without the necessity of all the work involved in reading it word by word. He read a paragraph here, a sentence there, and then idly turned to another page. "Gee," he repeated. "I wish I knew what he believed." But the sun was hot. The hum of the insects soporific.

Gradually the Gentleman of Color's head sank upon his chest. Slowly his dark fingers relaxed and the paperback book slithered from his nerveless hands and slid down to the gentle sand. The Gentleman of Color snored and snored, and was oblivious to all that went on about him in the mundane sphere of activity.

A passing youth glanced at the sleeping Negro and looked down at the book. Glancing again at the sleeper the youth edged forward and with prehensile toes reached and picked up the book which with bent leg he quickly transferred to his hand. Holding the book on the side away from the sleeper he moved away looking too innocent to be true.

Away he went into the little copse of trees. Passing through he came again into the sunlight and to a stretch of dazzling white sand. The boom of the breakers sounded in his ears but went unnoticed because this was his life, the sound of the waves on the rocks around the lagoon was an everyday sound to him. The hum of the insects and the chittering of the cicadas were his life, and, as such, unnoticed.

On he went, scuffling the fine sand with his toes for there was always a hope that some treasure or some coin would be unearthed for hadn't a friend of his once picked up a golden Piece of Eight while doing this?

There was a narrow strip of water dividing him from a spit of land containing three solitary trees. Wading he soon traversed the interruption and made his way to the space between the three trees. Carefully he lay down and slowly excavated a little pit to hold his hip bone. Then he rested his head comfortably against the tree root and looked at the book which he had filched from the sleeper.

Carefully he looked around to make sure that he was not observed, to make sure that no one was chasing him. Satisfied that all was safe, he settled back again and rubbed one hand through his woolly hair while with the other he idly turned over the book, first to the back where he read what the publisher had to say, and then he flipped the book over and studied the picture through half-closed slitted eyes and with furrowed brows and puckered lips as he muttered things incomprehensible to himself.

He scratched his crotch and pulled his pants to a more comfortable position. Then, resting on his left elbow, he flipped over the pages and started to read. "Thought forms, mantras, man-oh-man, ain't that shore sumpin! So maybe I could make a thought form

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and then Abigail would have to do whatever I wanted her to do. Gee man, yeh, I shore go for that." He rolled back and picked at his nose for a bit, then he said, "Wonder if I can believe all this."

The shadowed recesses of the room exuded an atmosphere of sanctity. All was quiet except that in the deep stone fireplace logs burned and sputtered. Every so often a jet of steam would shoot out and hiss angrily at the flames, steam generated by moisture trapped within imperfectly dried logs.

Every so often the wood would erupt in a little explosion sending a shower of sparks upwards. The flickering light added a strange feeling to the room, a feeling of mystery. At one side of the fireplace a deep deep armchair stood with its back facing the door. An old fashioned stand lamp made of brass rods stood beside the chair, and soft light was emitted from the medium powered electric light bulb concealed within the recesses of a green shade. The light went down, and then disappeared from sight because of the obstruction of the back of the chair.

There came a dry cough and the rustling of turning pages. Again there was silence except for the sputtering of a fire and for the regular fingering of paper as read pages were turned to reveal new material.

From the far distance there came the tolling of a bell, a tolling of slow tempo, and then soon there followed the shuffling of sandal-shod feet and the very soft murmur of voices. There was a clang of an opening door, and a minute later a hollow thud as the door was shut. Soon there came sounds of an organ and male voices raised in song. The song went on for some time and then there was rustling followed by silence, and the silence was destroyed by mumbling voices murmuring something incomprehensible but very well rehearsed.

In the room there was a startling slap as a book fell to the floor. Then a dark figure jumped up. "Oh my goodness me, I must have fallen asleep. What a perfectly astonishing thing to do!" The dark robed figure bent to pick up the book and carefully opened it to the appropriate page. Meticulously he inserted a bookmark, and quite respectfully placed the book on the table beside him. For some moments he sat there with hands clasped and furrowed brow, then he lifted from the chair and dropped to his knees facing a crucifix on the wall.

Kneeling, hands clasped, head bowed, he muttered a prayer of supplication for guidance. That completed he rose to his feet and went to the fireplace and placed another log on the brightly glowing embers. For some time he sat crouched at the side of the stone fireplace with head cupped between his hands.

On a sudden impulse he slapped his thigh and jumped to his feet. Rapidly he crossed the dark room and moved to a desk concealed in the shadows. A quick movement, a pull at a cord, and that corner of the room was flooded with warm light. The figure drew back a chair and opened the lid of the desk, and then sat down. For a moment he sat gazing blankly at the sheet of paper he had just put before him.

Absently he put out his right hand to feel for the book that wasn't there, and with a

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muttered exclamation of annoyance he rose to his feet and went to the chair to pick up the book deposited on the chairside table.

Back at the desk he sat and rifled through the pages until he found that which he sought—an address. Quickly he addressed an envelope and then sat and pondered, sorting out his thoughts, wondering what to do, wondering how to phrase the words he wanted to use. Soon he put nib to paper and all was quiet except for the scratching of a nib and the ticking of a distant clock.

"Dear Dr. Rampa," the letter commenced, "I am a Jesuit priest. I am a lecturer in the Humanities at our College, and I have read your books with more than the normal interest.

"I believe that only those who follow our own form of religion are able to obtain Salvation through the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that when I am teaching my students. I believe that when I am within the Church itself. But when I am alone in the dark hours of the night, when there is none to watch my reactions or analyze my thoughts then I wonder. Am I right in my Belief? Is there no one except a Catholic who may be saved? What of other religions, are they all false, are they all works of the devil? Or have I and others of my Belief been misled? Your books have shed much light and enabled me greatly to resolve the doubts of the spirit in which I am involved, and I would ask you, Sir, will you answer me some questions so that you may either shed some new light or strengthen that in which I believe."

Carefully he appended his name. Carefully he folded the letter and was inserting it in the envelope when a thought occurred to him. Quickly, almost guiltily, he snatched out the letter, unfolded it, and indited a postscript: "I ask you of your honor as one devoted to your own Belief not to mention my name nor that I have written to you as it is contrary to the rules of my Order." He initialed it, dried the ink, and then quickly inserted the folded letter in the envelope and sealed it. He fumbled among his papers until he found a book, and in that he made a note of the postage to Canada.

Searching in drawers and pigeonholes eventually produced the appropriate stamps which were affixed to the envelope. The priest then carefully tucked the letter in the inner recesses of his gown. Rising to his feet he extinguished the light and left the room.

"Ah Father," said a voice out in the corridor, "are you going into the town or can I do anything for you there? I have to go on an errand and I should be happy to be of service to you."

"No thank you, Brother," replied the senior professor to his subordinate, "I have a mind to take a turn in the town and to get some much needed exercise, so I think I will just stroll down to the main street." Gravely they took a half bow to each other, and each went his own way, the senior professor went out of the age-old building of gray stone stained with age and half covered with climbing ivy. Slowly he walked along the main drive, hands clasped about his crucifix, mumbling to himself as was the wont of those of his Order.

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In the main street just beyond the great gate people bowed respectfully at his appearance, and many crossed themselves. Slowly the elderly professor walked down the street to the letter box outside the post office. Guiltily, surreptitiously he looked about him to see if any of his Order were nearby. Satisfied that all was secure he removed the letter from his robes and flicked it into the letter box. Then with a heartfelt sigh of relief he turned and retraced his steps.

Back in his private study, again by the side of the sparkling fire and with a well-shaded light casting illumination on his book, he read and read deep into the hours of the night. At last he closed the book, locked it away, and went off to his cell murmuring to himself, "What should I believe, what should I believe?"

The lowering sky gazed dourly upon nighttime London. The teeming rain swept down upon the shivering streets scurrying passersby with grimly held umbrellas braced against the wind. London, the lights of London, and people hurrying home from work. Buses roared by, great giant red buses scattering water all over the sidewalks, and shivering groups of people trying to avoid the dirty spray.

In shop fronts people huddled in groups waiting for their own buses to come along, dashing out eagerly as a bus came along and then slinking back despondently as the indicators showed the wrong numbers. London, with half the city going home and another half coming on duty.

In Harley Street, the heart of London's medical world, a gray haired man paced restlessly on a bearskin rug in front of a roaring fire. Back and forth he strode, hands clasped behind his back, head bowed upon his chest. Then on impulse he flung himself into a well-padded leather armchair and pulled a book out of his pocket. Quickly he flipped through the pages until he found the passage he needed, a passage about the human aura. He read it again, and having read it turned back and read it once more. For a time he sat gazing into the fire, then he nodded in resolution and jumped to his feet. Quickly he left the room and went into another. Carefully he locked the door behind him and went to his desk. Pushing aside a lot of medical reports and certificates yet to be signed, he sat down and took some private note paper from a drawer.

"Dear Dr. Rampa," he wrote in an almost indecipherable handwriting, "I have read your book with absolute fascination, a fascination heightened very greatly by my own belief — by my own knowledge — that what you write is true."

He sat back and carefully read what he had just written, and to be quite sure he read it once again before resuming, "I have a son, a bright young fellow, who recently had an operation to his brain. Now, since that operation, he tells us that he is able to see strange colors around human bodies, he is able to see lights about the human head, but not only the human head, not only the human body - animals as well. For some time we have thought deeply on this matter, wondering what it was that we did wrong in the operation, thinking perhaps that we had disorganized his optic nerve, but after reading your book we know better; my son can see the human aura, therefore I know that you write the truth.

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"I should very much like to meet you if you are in London because I think you may be able to be of enormous assistance to my son. Yours very sincerely."

He re-read what he had written, and then, like a priest before him, was about to fold the letter and insert it in an envelope, but his eyes fell upon the bust of a medical pioneer. The specialist started as if he had been stung by a bee and quickly grabbed his pen again and added a postscript to his letter. "I trust that you will not reveal my name or the contents of this letter to anyone because it would injure my status in the eyes of my colleagues." Carefully he initialed it, folded it and put it in its envelope. Carefully he extinguished the lights and left the room. Outside his very expensive car was waiting. The chauffeur jumped to attention as the specialist said, "To the post office in Leicester Square." The car drove off and soon the letter was dropped into the letter box and eventually reached its destination.

And so the letters came in, letters from Here, letters from There, letters from Everywhere, from the North to the South, and from the East to the West — letters, letters, letters, an unending shoal of letters all demanding an answer, all asserting that their own problems were unique and no one ever before had such problems. Letters of condemnation, letters of praise, letters of supplication. From Trinidad came a letter written on the cheapest form of school exercise paper in an absolutely illiterate handwriting; "I am a Holy Missionary, I am working for the good of God. Give me ten thousand dollars and a new station wagon. Oh yes, and while you are about it send me a free set of your books and then I shall believe what you write."

From Singapore came a letter from two young Chinese men: "We want to become doctors. We have no money. We want you to pay our first class air fare from Singapore to your home, and then we will talk to you and tell you how you can give us the money so that we may be trained as doctors and do good for mankind. And you might send us extra money so we can see a friend of ours in New York, America. Do that for us and you will be doing good for people, and then we will believe."

The letters came in by their hundreds, in their thousands, all demanding an answer. Few, a pitiful few, even thought of the expense of writing, of stationery, of postage. They wrote, "Tell us more about what happens after death. Tell us more what IS death. We don't understand about dying, you don't tell us enough, you don't make it clear. Tell us everything."

Others wrote, "Tell us about religions, tell us if we have a hope after this life when we are not Catholics." Yet others wrote, "Give me a mantra so that I can win the Irish Sweepstake, and if I win the first prize of a million in the Irish Sweepstake I'll give you ten percent."

And yet another person wrote, "I live in New Mexico, there is a lost mine here. Tell me where is the lost mine — you can go into the astral and find it — and if you tell me where it is and I find it and make it mine I will give you a present of some money for your services."

People wrote that I should tell them more, tell them all, tell them more than all so

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that they would know what to believe.

Mrs. Sheelagh Rouse sat grimly at her desk, her gold rimmed glasses were perched precariously on the bridge of her nose and every so often she would put a finger up and push them back into place.

She looked at the wheelchair passing her door and said, somewhat fiercely, "You've only written sixteen books, why not write another, the seventeenth, telling people what they CAN believe? Look at all the letters you've had asking for another book, asking you to tell them what they can believe — I'll type it for you!" she concluded brightly.

Miss Tadalinka and Miss Cleopatra Rampa sat in the corridor in front of the wheelchair and smiled contentedly.

Miss Taddy, deep in thought, had to scratch her left ear with her left foot while she concentrated on the implications of yet another book. Satisfied she rose to her legs and waddled away back to her favorite chair.

Mama San Ra'ab Rampa looked up with a rather pale bemused expression on her face. Without a word — perhaps she was speechless! — she handed me a piece of blue card with a heading of "Mama San Ra'ab Rampa, Pussywillow", and then in the center of the page I saw my own face in blue just as if I had been dead for too long and dug up too late.

And below that, the weirdest looking Siamese cat face I have ever seen. Well, for a time it left me speechless, but I suppose that it is nice to see the first cover of one's first book. I am biased because this is my seventeenth and there is no longer any novelty. But, "Mama San," I said, "what do YOU think of another book? Is it worth all the effort with me stuck in bed like a stupid dummy, or shall I give it up?"

Mama San metaphorically uncrossed her eyes after the impact of her first book cover, and said, "Oh yes, of course you should write a book. I am thinking of writing my second!"

Miss Cleo Rampa and Miss Taddy Rampa took a good sniff at the cover and walked away with their tails in the air. Apparently it met with their approval.

Just then the telephone rang and it was John Henderson, away in the wilds of the U.S.A., at the confluence of many waters. He said, "Hi Boss, I've been reading some very good articles in praise of you. There's a good one in the magazine I've sent on to you."

"Well, John," I replied, "I couldn't care two hoots, or even one hoot what magazines or newspapers write about me. I do not read them whether they are good or bad articles. But, what do YOU think of another book, a seventeenth?"

"Gee, Boss," said John H., "that's what I've been waiting to hear! It's time you wrote another book, everyone is anxious, and I understand the booksellers are getting many inquiries."

Well, that was quite a blow; everyone seemed to be ganging up, everyone seemed to want another book. But what can a poor fellow do when he is approaching the end of

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his life and he has a ferocious tax demand from a wholly unsympathetic country - and something has to be done to keep the home fires burning, or to keep the income tax jackals from the front door.

One of the things I feel bitter about — the income tax. I am very disabled and most of my time is spent in bed. I am not a charge on the country but I pay a most vicious tax without any allowances because I am an author working at home. And yet some of the oil companies here do not pay any tax at all because some of them are engaged upon entirely mythical "research" and, as such, are tax exempt. And then I think of some of these crackpot cultists who set up as a nonprofit organization paying themselves, their relatives and their friends high salaries, but they pay no tax because they are registered as a nonprofit organization.

So it came about that unwillingly it was necessary for me to write a seventeenth book, and so the consensus of opinion was, after perusal of letter after letter after letter, that the title should be "I believe".

This book will tell of life before birth, life on Earth, and the passing from Earth and return to Life Beyond. I have the title of "I believe", but that is wholly incorrect; it is not a question of belief, it is KNOWLEDGE. I can do everything I write about. I can go into the astral as easily as another person can go into another room - well, that's what I cannot do, go into another room without fiddling about on crutches and a wheelchair and all the rest of it, but in the astral one does not need crutches, wheelchairs or drugs. So what I write about in this book is the truth. I am not expressing an opinion, but just telling things as they REALLY are.

Now is the time to get down to it. So — on to Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO

ALGERNON REGINALD ST. CLAIR DE BONKERS fell to the floor of the bathroom with a soggy scrunch. Algernon lay upon the floor and from him there came bubbling, mewling sounds. Out in the corridor a chambermaid who was passing stopped in her tracks and felt the icy fingers of fear crawl up and down her spine. Tremulously she called through the door, "Are you all right, Sir Algernon? Sir Algernon, are you all right?" Receiving no reply she turned the door handle and entered the bathroom.

Immediately her hair stood up on her neck, and drawing a tremendous breath she let go with the most marvelous scream of her career, and continued to scream, getting higher and higher up the scale as she did so. Thoroughly out of breath, she collapsed in a dead faint by the side of Algernon on the floor.

There came the sound of excited voices. There came the sound of pounding feet up the stairs and along the corridor. The first-comers stopped with such abruptness that they tore the carpet from its fastening, then clustered together as if to give each other confidence they peered in the open doorway.

Algernon Reginald St. Clair de Bonkers lay upon his face on the bathroom floor,

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blood pouring from a gash across his throat and soaking the unconscious body of the chambermaid lying beside him. Suddenly she took a quick gasp, twitched, and opened her eyes. For seconds she looked at the pool of blood beneath her, shuddered, and then with an eldritch scream which jarred the nerves of those around she slumped again into her faint, this time her face well immersed in the alleged blue blood of her employer.

Algernon lay upon the ground. He felt that everything was spinning, everywhere was fantastically unreal. He heard a keening, mewling noise and then hideous bubblings which gradually became less bubbly as the blood seeped out of his mutilated body.

Algernon felt very strange workings within him. Then there was a terrific screech and the chambermaid fell down beside him, bumping his body in the process. With the sudden jar Sir Algernon was pushed right out of his body and jumped upwards like a balloon on a string.

For some seconds he looked about, amazed at the strange, strange viewpoint. He seemed to be floating face down from the ceiling, and then, as he gazed down at two bodies beneath him he saw a Silver Cord extending from his "new" body to the old one lying supine. As he watched the Cord turned dark gray, hideous spots appeared where it joined the body on the floor, and then it withered and dropped away like an umbilical cord. But Algernon stayed there as if glued to the ceiling. He made loud shouts for help not realizing that he was out of a dead body and into the astral plane. He stayed there, stuck against the ornamental ceiling of the ancestral home. He stayed there invisible to the gawking faces which peered into the bathroom, took an inordinate time to look around, and then disappeared to be replaced by others.

He saw the chambermaid recover consciousness, gaze at the blood into which she had fallen, screech and faint again. The heavy studied voice of the butler broke the silence.

"Now, now," he said, "let us not have panic. You, Bert," pointing to a footman, "go and call the Police, call Dr. Mackintosh, and I think you should call the Undertaker as well."

Having concluded that oration, he gestured imperiously to the footman and turned to the two bodies. Pulling up his trousers so they should not crease over his knees, he stooped down and very gingerly caught hold of the wrist of the chambermaid, exclaiming in extreme distaste as his hand encountered blood. Quickly he removed his hand and wiped the blood off on the chambermaid's skirt. Then, grasping the poor maid by one leg — by one ankle — he pulled her straight out of the bathroom. There were subdued titters as the poor maid's skirt rolled up around her waist and up to her shoulders, titters which were quickly suppressed at a glare from the butler.

The housekeeper stepped forward and demurely bent down, and in the interests of modesty rearranged the chambermaid's skirts around her. Then two menservants lifted the chambermaid and hurried down the corridor with her, trailing blood from her blood-soaked clothes as they did so.

The butler eased further into the bathroom and looked cautiously around. "Ah,

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yes," he said, "there is the instrument with which Sir Algernon ended his life." He pointed to a bloodstained open razor which had skidded along the floor to the side of the bath.

He stood like a monolith in the bathroom doorway until the sound of galloping horses was heard outside. Then there came the footman who said, "The Police are here, Mr. Harris, and the doctor is on his way."

There were excited voices in the hallway and then a very heavy, very majestic tread came up the stairway and down the corridor.

"Well, well, and what have we here?" said a rough voice, "I understand that there has been a suicide, but are you sure it is not murder?" The speaker, a policeman in blue uniform, poked his head into the bathroom, automatically reaching for the notebook ever-ready in his breast pocket. Taking the stub of a pencil, he licked it and then carefully opened the notebook. Then there came the sound of a fast-trotting horse, and more commotion at the doorway, followed by a much lighter, much quicker tread on the stairs. A slim young man came along carrying a black case: "Ah, Mr. Harris," said the young man who was, in fact, the doctor, "I understand you have some illness here, some tragedy maybe, eh?" "Now, now, doctor," said the red-faced policeman, "we have not finished our investigations yet. We must find the cause of death—"

"But, sergeant," said the doctor, "are you sure that he really is dead? Shouldn't we see to that first?"

Mutely the sergeant pointed to the body and to the fact that the head was almost cut off from the neck. The wound gaped wide now that all the blood had drained out of the body and seeped all over the bathroom floor and all along the carpet in the corridor. The sergeant said, "Now, Mr. Harris, Let's have your account of it. Who did it?"

The butler licked his nervous lips as he was not at all happy at the way things were turning. He felt as if he were being accused of murder, but even the meanest intellect would have seen that the injuries on the body were self-inflicted. But he knew he had to keep in with the Law, and so he started:

"As you well know, my name is George Harris. I am the head butler to this household. The staff and I were startled to hear a chambermaid — Alice White — screaming, her voice going higher and higher until we thought that our nerves would break under the strain, and then there was a thud and nothing more. So we raced up here and we found— " he paused dramatically, and then thrust his hands in the direction of the bathroom and said, "this!"

The sergeant mumbled to himself and chewed at his moustache, a long drooping affair which had trailers at each side of his mouth. Then he said, "Produce this Alice White. I will interrogate her now."

The housekeeper came bustling down a corridor saying, "Oh no you won't, sergeant, we are having to bath her, she is covered in blood and she has a fit of hysterics. Poor soul, I don't wonder at it either. Now don't you think you can come here bullying us because we did not do this thing, and I'll have you remember all the times you've come

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to my back kitchen of a night to have a good meal!"

The doctor moved forward very gingerly, and said, "Well, we'd better have a look at the body, we seem to be wasting a lot of time and getting nowhere in the process." So saying, he stepped forward and carefully took the links out of his starched cuffs, put them in his pocket, and then rolled up his sleeves, after passing his jacket to the butler for his care.

Stooping down, the doctor carefully examined the body without touching it. Then, with a quick movement of his foot, he flipped the body right over until it was facing up with the staring eyes gazing up.

The entity who had been Sir Algernon was looking down in fascination at all this. He felt very strange about it, for a moment he could not understand what had happened. but some force kept him pinned to the ceiling upside-down, the living Algernon gazing down into the dead, glazed, bloody eyes of the dead Algernon. He rested upside-down against the ceiling in rapt attention, spellbound at the strange experience. His attention was riveted at the words of Mr. Harris.

"Yes, poor Sir Algernon was a subaltern in the Boer War. He fought very nobly against the Boers and he was badly wounded. Unfortunately he was wounded in a most delicate place which I cannot describe more adequately in front of the ladies present, and increasingly of late his inability to — ah — perform has led to bouts of depression, and on numerous occasions we and others have heard him threaten that life without his necessities was not worth living, and he threatened to end it all."

The housekeeper gave a sniff of commiseration, and the second housemaid sniffed in sympathy. The first footman muttered assent that he, too, had heard such things. Then the doctor gazed at all the towels so neatly arrayed on the racks and with a quick movement spread them all on the bathroom floor. With a foot he swept away the blood which even now was commencing to coagulate. Then, turning his eyes to the bath rail, he saw a bath mat there, quite a thick thing. He placed it on the floor beside the body and knelt down. Taking his wooden rod stethoscope he unbuttoned the clothing of the corpse and put the wooden button end to the chest and applied his ear to the recess shaped in the wood at the other end. Everyone was still, everyone held their breath, and then at last the doctor shook his head in negation saying, "No, life is extinct, he is dead." With that, he removed his wooden stethoscope, tucked it inside his trousers in a special pocket, and stood up, wiping his hands on a cloth handed to him by the housekeeper.

The sergeant pointed to the razor and said, "Doctor, is that the instrument which ended this body's life?" The doctor glanced down, moved the razor with his foot, and then picked it up through the folds of the cloth. "Yes," he said, "this has severed from the carotid through the jugular and on to the carotid. Death must have been almost instantaneous. I estimate that it took about seven minutes to die."

Sergeant Murdock was very busy licking his pencil and writing copious notes in his book. Then there came a heavier rumble as of a wagon being drawn by horses. Again the doorbell pealed in the kitchen. Again there were voices in the hall, and then a dap-

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per little man came up the stairs, bowed ceremoniously to the butler, to the doctor, and to the sergeant in that order. "Ah, is the body ready for me?" he asked. "I was asked to come here and collect a body, the body of a suicide."

The sergeant looked at the doctor, the doctor looked at the sergeant, then they both looked at Mr. Harris. "Do you have anything to say about this, Mr. Harris? Do you know if any of the corpse's relatives are coming?" asked the sergeant.

"No, sergeant, they would have no time to come here so quickly. I believe the nearest relative lives about half an hour's journey by fast horse, and I have already sent a messenger. I think it would be in order to have the undertaker take the body away to his parlor because, obviously, we cannot have the relatives seeing Sir Algernon in such a deplorable condition, can we?"

The sergeant looked at the doctor and the doctor looked at the sergeant, and then simultaneously they said, "Yes." So the sergeant as the representative of the Law said, "All right, take away the body, but let us at the Station have a very full report at the earliest possible moment. The Superintendent will want it before the morning."

The doctor said, "I shall have to inform the Coroner of this, it is probable that he will want to conduct an autopsy."

The doctor and the sergeant moved away. The undertaker gently shooed away the butler, the footmen, the housekeeper and the maids, and then two of his men came up the stairs carrying a light casket. Together they put the casket on the floor outside the bathroom and removed the lid.

Inside it was about a quarter full of sawdust. Then they moved into the bathroom and lifted up the body, dropping it unceremoniously into the sawdust in the casket, carefully putting the lid back into position.

Perfunctorily they rinsed their hands under the tap and, not finding any clean towels, they wiped their dripping hands on the curtains. Then out they went into the corridor, treading half congealed blood all over the corridor carpet.

With many a grunt they lifted the casket and proceeded towards the stairs. "Bear a hand here, you men," called the undertaker to two footmen, "take the lower end, we mustn't tip him out." Two men hurried forward, and carefully the casket was eased down the stairs and out into the open, and slid into a black covered wagon. The undertaker got inside, the two assistants got up on the box, the reins were picked up and the horses ambled off at a leisurely pace.

Sergeant Murdock moved ponderously up the stairs again and went into the bathroom. With a cloth he picked up the open razor and put it aside. Then he carried out an inspection to see if anything else of use as evidence could be found.

The spirit of Sir Algernon, glued to the ceiling, looked down in utter fascination. Then for some reason Sergeant Murdock turned his eyes to the ceiling, emitted a bellow of fright, and fell down with a honk that cracked the toilet seat. With that the spirit of Sir Algernon vanished, and he himself lost consciousness, being aware only of a strange

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humming, a weird swirling, and clouds of rolling blackness like the smoke from a paraffin reading lamp which had been turned too high and left unattended in a room.

And so darkness fell upon him, and the spirit of Sir Algernon took no further interest in the proceedings, at least for the time being.

Algernon Reginald St. Clair de Bonkers stirred uneasily in what seemed to be a deeply drugged sleep. Strange thoughts swarmed across his half-submerged consciousness. There came bursts of heavenly music followed by wild outpourings of hellish sound. Algernon stirred fretfully, and in one period of greater consciousness he stirred and found to his astonishment that his movements were sluggish, torpid, as though he were immersed in a gooey mess.

Algernon Reginald St. Clair de Bonkers woke up with a start and tried to sit erect but found his movements constricted, he could only move in slow motion. Panic struck and he tried to flail about in his anguish but found his movements were slow, turgid, and it calmed him down quite a lot.

He felt for his eyes to see if they were open or shut because he could see no light. It did not matter if his eyes were open or shut, there was no sensation of light. He put his hands down to feel the texture of the bed, but then he shrieked in shock because there was no bed beneath him, he was suspended — as he himself put it — "like a fish stuck in syrup in a fish tank".

For a time he feebly flailed with his arms as does a swimmer, trying to push against something so he would have the satisfaction of getting somewhere. But as hard as he pushed with his widespread hands and arms and his thrusting feet, so did "something" hold him back.

To his astonishment all his efforts failed to make him breathless, failed to make him tired, so, having seen the uselessness of an attempt at physical effort, he just lay still and thought.

"Where was I?" he thought back. "Oh yes, I remember, I decided to kill myself, I decided that it was useless going on as I had been going on, bereft of female society because of the nature of my disability. How unfortunate it was," he muttered to himself, "that the filthy Boers should have shot me *there!*"

For some moments he lay there thinking of the past, thinking of the bearded Boer who had raised his rifle and deliberately, quite deliberately, aimed at him not with a view to killing him, but with the definite objective of what must politely be termed robbing him of his manhood. He thought of the "dear Vicar" who had recommended Algernon's house as a very safe refuge for servant girls who had to earn a living. He thought, too, of his father who had said while the young man was still a schoolboy, "Well, Algernon, m'lad, you have to get to learn the facts of life, you have to practice on some of the servant girls we have here, you'll find them quite useful to play with but be sure you do not take things too seriously. These lower classes are there for our convenience, aren't they?"

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"Yes," he thought, "even the housekeeper had smiled a peculiar little smile when a particularly comely young maid servant was engaged. The housekeeper said, "You'll be quite safe here, dear, the Master will not bother you at all, he's like one of those horses in the field, you know, they've been doctored. Yes, you'll be quite safe here," and the housekeeper had turned away with a sly little chuckle.

Algernon reviewed his life in some detail. The shattering impact of the bullet and how he had doubled up and vomited in anguish. Still in his ears he could hear the raucous laughter of the old Boer farmer as he said, "No more gels for you, m'lad, we'll stop you from continuing the family name. Now you'll be like them there eunuchs we used to hear about."

Algernon felt himself grow hot all over with the shame of it, and it reminded him of the long-term plan he had made, a plan to commit suicide following the decision that he could not go on living under such strange conditions. He found it quite intolerable when the Vicar called upon him and made oblique references to his ailment, and said how glad he would be to have such a safe young man help with the Women's meetings and the Sunday afternoon sewing sessions and all that sort of thing because — the Vicar said — "We cannot be too careful, can we? We must not impugn the good name of our Church, must we?"

And then there was the doctor, the old family doctor, Dr. Mortimer Davis who used to ride up of an evening on his old horse Wellington. Dr. Davis would sit down in the study and together they would have a comfortable glass of wine, but the comfort was always ruined when the doctor would say, "Well, Sir Algernon, I think I should examine you, we have to make sure you do not develop feminine characteristics because unless we exercise the most extreme supervision you may find that your facial hair will fall out and you will develop — ahem - female breasts. One of the things for which we must be most observant is for any change in the timbre of your voice because now that you have lost certain glands the chemistry of your body has changed."

The doctor looked at him most quizzically to see how he was taking it, and then said, "Well now, I think I could do with another glass of wine, you have most excellent wine here, your dear father was a great connoisseur of the luxuries of life especially with the distaff side of the luxuries, heh, heh, heh!"

Poor Algernon had all that he could take when one day he heard the butler talking to the housekeeper, "A terrible thing, you know, how it happened to Sir Algernon, such a lively virile young man, such a credit to his class. I know well how, before you came here and before he went to the War, he used to ride to hounds and made a very favorable impression on the matrons of the district. They were always inviting Sir Algernon to parties, they always looked upon him as a most eligible young man and a very desirable suitor for a daughter who had just come out. But now — well, the mothers of the district look upon him with commiseration but at least they know he doesn't need a chaperone when he goes out with their daughters. A very safe young man, a very safe young man indeed."

"Yes," thought Algernon, "a very safe young man indeed. I wonder what they would

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have done in my place, lying there on the battlefield bleeding with my uniform breeches soaked in red, and then the surgeon coming along in the field and cutting off my clothing and with a sharp knife just amputating the tattered remnants of what made him different from a woman. Oh! The agony of it. Nowadays there is this thing they call chloroform which is stated to relieve pain, to give one surcease from the agony of operations, but on the field, no, nothing but a slashing knife and the bullet between one's teeth so one can bite down on the bullet and stop oneself from screaming. And then the shame of it, the shame of being deprived — THERE. The sight of one's fellow subalterns looking embarrassed and, at the same time, uttering salacious stories behind one's back.

"Yes, the shame of it, the shame of it. The last member of an old family, the de Bonkers who came over with the Norman invasion and who settled in that very salubrious part of England and built a large manor house and had tenant farmers. Now he, the last of the line, impotent through service to his country, impotent and laughed at by his peers. And what is there to laugh at?" he thought, "in a man becoming maimed in the service of others? He thought that now, because he had fought for his country, his line would fall into desuetude."

Algernon lay there, neither in the air, neither on the ground. He could not decide where he was, he could not decide what he was. He lay there flapping like a newly-landed fish, and then thought, "Am I dead? What is death? I saw myself dead, then how am I here?"

Inevitably his thoughts turned again to events since his return to England. He saw himself walking with some difficulty, and then carefully noting the expressions and the actions of his neighbors, of his family, and of his servants.

The idea had grown that he should kill himself, that he should end a useless life. He had at one time locked himself away in his study and got out his pistol, carefully cleaned it, carefully loaded it and primed it. Then he had put the muzzle to his right temple and pulled the trigger. Just a sodden thunk had resulted. For moments he had sat there bemused, unbelieving, his trusty pistol which he had carried and used throughout the War had betrayed him at last, he was still alive. He spread a sheet of clean paper on the desk in front of him and lowered the pistol on to it. Everything was as it should be, powder, ball, and cap, everything was perfectly in order. He assembled it again, powder, ball, and cap, and without thinking he pulled the trigger. There was a loud bang, and he had shot out his window. There came running feet and a pounding on the door. Slowly he had risen to his feet and unlocked the door to admit a white-faced, frightened butler. "Oh, Sir Algernon, Sir Algernon, I thought some dreadful mishap had occurred," said the butler in considerable agitation.

"Oh no, it's quite all right, I was just cleaning my pistol and it went off — get a man to replace the window, will you?"

Then there had been the attempt at horse riding. He had taken an old gray mare and had been riding out of the stables when a stable boy had tittered and murmured to an ostler, "Two old mares together now, eh, what d'you think of that?" He turned and struck at the boy with his riding crop, and then flung the reins over the horse's neck,

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jumped to the ground and hastened back to his home, never to ride a horse again.

Then another time he thought of that strange plant which had come from the almost unknown country of Brazil a plant which was supposed to give instant death to those who chewed its berries and got the poisonous juice down one's throat. He had done that, he had such a plant which had been presented to him by a world traveler. For days he had carefully watered the plant, nourished it like a firstborn child, and then when the plant was blooming and healthy he had taken off the berries and stuffed them in his mouth.

"Oh! The agony of it," he thought, "the shame of it. No death, but things a thousand times worse than death. Such a gastric disturbance! Never in all history," he thought, "had there been such a purge, such a purge that he could not even take himself in time to the littlest room. And the shock of the housekeeper when she had to take his very soiled clothes and pass them to the laundry woman." His face burned red at the mere thought of it.

And then this latest attempt. He had sent up to London to the finest swordsmith of that city, and there had been obtained for him the best and sharpest of razors, a beautiful instrument deeply engraved with the maker's name and crest. Sir Algernon had taken that wonderful blade and stropped it and stropped it and stropped it. And then, with one quick slash, he had cut his throat from ear to ear so that only the support of the spine in the neck had kept his head upon his shoulders.

So he had seen himself dead. He knew he was dead because he knew he had killed himself, and then he had looked from the ceiling and seen himself on the floor with rapidly glazing eyes. He lay there in the darkness, in the turgid darkness, and thought and thought and thought.

Death? What WAS death? Was there anything after death? He and his fellow subalterns and other officers in the Mess had often debated the subject. The Padre had tried to explain about the life immortal, about going to Heaven, and one dashing Hussar, a major had said, "Oh no, Padre, I am sure it's absolutely wrong. When one is dead one is dead and that's all there is to it. If I go and kill a Boer are you telling me that he'll go straight to Heaven or the Other Place? If I kill him with a bullet through his heart and I am standing there with my foot on his chest, I can tell you that he's very much under me, dead, dead as a stuffed pig. When we're dead we're dead and There's nothing more to it."

He thought again of all the arguments for life after death. He wondered why anyone could say there was life after death. "If you kill a man — well, he's dead and that's all there is to it. If there was a soul then you'd see something leave the body at death, wouldn't you?"

Algernon lay there and pondered the whole matter, wondering what had happened, where was he? And then he had the terrible thought that perhaps it was all a nightmare and he had had a brainstorm and was confined in an asylum for the mad. Carefully he felt about him to see if there were any restraining straps. But no, he was floating, that's all there was to it, he was floating like a fish in water. So he returned to

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wonder what it was. "Death? Am I dead? Then if I am dead where am I, what am I doing in this strange condition floating idly?"

Words of the Padre came back to him: "When you leave your body an angel will be there to greet you and to guide you. You will be judged by God Himself, and then you will have whatever punishment God Himself decrees." Algernon wondered about that whole matter. "If God was a kind God why did a person have to be punished as soon as he was dead? And if he was dead how could a punishment affect him? He was here now; he thought, "lying quietly, no particular pain, no particular joy, just lying there quietly."

At that moment Algernon started with fear. Something had brushed by him. It was like having a hand put inside one's skull. He got an impression, not a voice, but an impression, a sensation that someone was thinking at him, "Peace, be still, listen."

For a few moments Algernon flailed away, trying to run. This was too mysterious, this was too unsettling, but he was stuck there. And so once again he had the impression, "Peace, be still, and be freed from this."

Algernon thought to himself, "I am an officer and a gentleman, I must not panic, I must be an example to my men." So, confused though he was, he composed himself and let tranquillity and peace enter within him.

CHAPTER THREE

ALGERNON suddenly shuddered with shock. Panic took hold of him. For a moment he thought that his brain was going to burst out of its skull.

About him the blackness grew even blacker. Although he could not see in the total darkness he could inexplicably *feel* turgid clouds of blacker than blackness swirling around, enveloping him.

Through the darkness he seemed to see a brilliant ray of light, pencil-thin, reaching out to him and touching him, and along the pencil-thin ray of light came the impression "Peace, peace, be still and we will talk to you."

By superhuman efforts Algernon got a grip on his panic. Gradually he calmed down and once again rested more or less placidly awaiting developments. They were swift in coming; "We are willing to help you — we are very anxious to help you but you will not let us."

Algernon rolled the thought around in his brain. "You will not let us," he thought, "but I haven't said a word to them, how can they say that I won't let them help me? I don't know who they are, I don't know what they are going to do, I don't even know where I am. If this is death," he thought, "well, what is it? Negation? Nothingness? Am I to be condemned for eternity to live in darkness like this? But even that," he thought, "poses a problem. Live? Well, do I live?"

Thoughts swirled about him and his brain was in turmoil. Teachings of his early youth came to him: "There is no death— I am the Resurrection — In my Father's house

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there are many mansions, I go to prepare a Way for you — If you behave you will go to Heaven — If you misbehave you will go to Hell — Only Christians have a chance for Heaven." So many contradictory statements, so much misunderstanding, so much of the blind teaching the blind. The priests and the Sunday School teachers, people blind themselves trying to teach others who they thought were even blinder. "Hell?" he thought. "What IS Hell? What is Heaven? IS there Heaven?"

A strong thought broke in on his cogitations: "We are willing to help you if you will first accept the premise that you are alive and that there is life after death. We are willing to help you if you are prepared unreservedly to believe in us and believe in that which we can teach you."

Algernon's brain railed at the thought. What was this rubbish about accepting help? What was this stupid nonsense about believing? What *could* he believe? If he was to believe then it implied there was a doubt. He wanted facts not beliefs. The facts were that he had died by his own hand, and the second fact was that he had seen his dead body, and the third fact was that he was now in total blackness apparently immersed in some sticky, turgid substance which prevented much movement. And then stupid people from he knew not where were sending thoughts into his head saying that he should believe. Well — *what* should he believe?

"You are in the next stage after death," the voice, or thought, or impression, or whatever it was, said to him. "You have been misinformed, mistaught and misled upon the Earth, and if you want to come out of your self-imposed prison then we will get you out." Algernon rested quietly and thought over the matter, and then he thought back.

"Well," he thought strongly, "if you want me to believe, first of all you should tell me what is happening to me. You say I am in the first stage after death, but I thought death was the end of everything."

"Precisely!" broke in the thought or the voice very strongly. "Precisely! You are surrounded by the black clouds of doubt, by the black clouds of unreason. You are surrounded by the blackness of ignorance, and this isolation is self-made, self-imposed and can only be self-destroyed."

Algernon did not like that a bit. It seemed to be blaming him for everything. Then he said, "But I have no reason to believe, I can only go by what I have been taught. I have been taught various things in churches, and while a mere boy I was taught by Sunday School teachers and by a Governess, and now do you think I can scrap all that just because some unknown, unidentified impression comes to my mind? *Do* something to show me that there is something beyond this blackness."

Suddenly a break appeared in the darkness. Suddenly the blackness rolled aside like curtains on a stage rolling aside that the actors could make their debut. Algernon was almost struck senseless by the influx of bright light and by the wondrous vibrations in the atmosphere. He almost screamed in the ecstasy of the moment, and then — doubt, and with the doubt came the rolling in of the blackness again until once more he was engulfed in turgid darkness. Doubt, panic, self- recrimination, railing against the teach-

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ings of the world.

He began to doubt his sanity. How could things like this be possible? He was certain by now that he was insane, certain that he was suffering hallucinations. His mind went back to that very potent Brazilian plant which he had ingested; supposing there had been side-effects, supposing he was suffering from long-delayed hallucinations. He had seen his dead body on the floor — but had he? How could he see himself if he was dead? He thought of looking down from the ceiling, he thought of the bald spot on the top of the butler's head. Well, if it were true why had he not noticed that bald spot before? If it were true why had he not noticed that the housekeeper obviously wore a wig? He pondered on the problem and wavered between the thought that life after death was possible and the thought that he was undeniably insane.

"We will leave you to come to your own decision because the Law is that no person may be helped unless that person is willing to receive help. When you are ready to receive help, say so and we will come. And, remember, there is no reason whatever for you to continue this quite self-imposed isolation. This blackness is a figment of your imagination."

Time had no meaning. Thoughts came and went. But what, Algernon wondered, was the speed of thought? How many thoughts had he had? If he knew then he could work out how long he had been in this position and in this condition. But no, time no longer had meaning. Nothing had meaning as far as he could see. He reached his hands down and could feel nothing beneath him. Slowly, with infinite effort, he swept his arms up at full length. There was nothing, nothing at all that he could feel, nothing except the strange dragging as if he was pulling his arms through syrup.

Then he let his hands rest upon his body and felt. Yes, his head was there, his neck, his shoulders, obviously his arms were there because he was using his hands to feel himself. But then he really jumped. He was naked, and he started to blush at the thought. What if some person should come in and find him naked? In his strata of society one simply did not appear naked, it was "not done". But so far as he could tell he still had his human body. And then his wandering, probing fingers stopped suddenly and he came to the definite conclusion that he was indeed mad — mad — for his searching fingers encountered parts which had been shot at by that Boer marksman and the remnants removed by the surgeon's knife. So he was intact again! Obviously it was imagination.

Obviously, he thought, he had looked down at his dying body and he was still dying. But then the inescapable thought occurred to him that he had looked down. Well, how COULD he look down if he was indeed the body that was dying? And if he could look down then obviously some part of him, his soul or whatever one calls it, must have got out of the body, and the mere fact that he could look down upon himself indicated that there was "something" after death.

He lay there pondering, pondering, pondering. His brain seemed to be clicking like a machine. Gradually little bits of knowledge picked up in various parts of the world slipped into place. He thought of some religion — what was it? Hindu? Moslem? He didn't know, one of these outlandish foreign religions which only the natives believed in, but

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still, they taught that there was life after death, they taught that good men who died went to a place where there were unlimited willing girls available. Well, he could not see any girls available or not available, but it set him on a train of thought. There **MUST** be life after death, there must be something, and there must be someone otherwise how could he have got such a searchlight-bright thought in his mind?

Algernon jumped with amazement. "Oh! The dawn is coming," he exclaimed. Indeed the darkness was less dark now, the turgidity around him was less as well, and he found himself sinking down gently, gently until his outstretched hands hanging down below the body felt "something". As the body sank even lower he found that his hands were clutching — no, it couldn't be! But further probings confirmed that, yes, his hands were in contact with soft grass, and then his unresisting body was resting upon short, cropped turf.

The realization flooded in that he was at last in some material place and there were other things besides darkness, and as he thought, as he realized this, so the darkness became less and he was as one in a light mist. Through the mist he could see vague figures, not clearly, not enough to distinguish what the figures were, but "figures".

Looking up he found a shadowy figure looming over him. He could just see two hands raised as though in benediction, and then a voice, not a thought inside his head this time, but an undeniable honest-to-goodness English voice obviously from one who had been to Eton or Oxford!

"Rise to your feet, my son," said the voice. "Rise to your feet and take my hands, feel that I am solid like you, and in so feeling you will have one more item of proof that you are alive — in a different state admittedly, but alive, and the sooner you realize that you are alive and that there is life after death then the sooner will you be able to enter the Great Reality."

Algernon made feeble attempts to get to his feet, but things seemed to be different somehow, he didn't seem able to move his muscles as he used to, but then the voice came again: "Picture yourself rising, picture yourself standing." Algernon did that and, to his amazement, found that he was standing upright being clasped by a figure which was becoming brighter and plainer and brighter and plainer until he could see before him a middle-aged man of remarkably bright aspect and clad in yellow robes. Algernon gazed down at the length of the figure and then his range of vision encountered himself. He saw that he was naked. Immediately he let out a shriek of fright, "Oh!" he said, "where are my clothes? I cannot be seen like this!"

The figure smiled at him and gently said, "Clothes do not make the man, my friend. One is born to the Earth without clothes, and one is reborn to this world without clothes. Think of the type of clothes you would like to wear and you will find them upon you."

Algernon thought of himself as a gay young subaltern clad in dark navy blue trousers, the legs reaching right down to the heels, and a bright red jacket. Around his waist he pictured a dazzlingly white blanched belt with ammunition pouches. He pictured the brilliant brass buttons polished so sharply that one could see one's face in each. And

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then upon his head he pictured the dark pill box hat with the leather strap going down his cheek, beneath his chin, and up the other cheek. He pictured the scabbard at his side, and then he smiled to himself a secret inward smile as he thought, "Let them produce THAT!" To his ineffable astonishment he found his body constricted by uniform, by the tightness of a belt, by the tightness of military boots. He found the tug at his side where the weight of the scabbard and the weight of the pistol holster tried to drag the belt down. He felt beneath his chin the pressure of the chinstrap. And then, as he turned his head, he could see the glittering epaulets upon his shoulders. It was too much — too much. Algernon fainted and would have tumbled to the turf had not the middle-aged man gently lowered him.

Algernon's eyelids fluttered and weakly he murmured, "I believe, oh Lord, I believe. Forgive me my sins, forgive me the trespasses which I have committed."

The man with him smiled benignly upon him, and said, "I am not the Lord, I am just one whose task it is to help those who come from the Earth life to this, the intermediate stage, and I am ready to help you when you are ready to receive the proffered help."

Algernon rose to his feet, this time without difficulty, and said, "I am ready to receive such help as you can give me. But, tell me, did you go to Eton, were you at Balliol?"

The figure smiled and said, "Just call me friend, and we will deal with your questions later. First you have to enter into our world."

He turned and waved his hands in a sweeping motion, as if he were drawing curtains, in fact, and indeed the result was the same. The clouds of darkness dissipated, the shadows vanished, and Algernon found that he was standing on the greenest of green grass. The air about him was vibrant with life, pulsating with energy. From unknown sources there came impressions — not sounds, but impressions of music, "music in the air" he would have described it, and he found it remarkably soothing.

People were walking about just as people would walk about in a public park. It gave him, at first glance, an impression that he could have been walking about in Green Park or Hyde Park, London, but a very specially beautified Green Park or Hyde Park. Couples were sitting on seats, people were walking about, and then once again Algernon had a terrific impulse of fear because some people were moving along inches above the ground! One person was absolutely racing across the countryside at about ten feet above the ground, and was being chased by another person, and there were joyful shouts of happiness coming from both of them. Algernon felt a sudden chill along his spine and he shuddered, but his Friend gently took him by the arm and said, "Come, let us sit over here because I want to tell you a little of this world before we go any further otherwise the sights that you will see beyond might indeed impede your recovery."

"Recovery," said Algernon. "Recovery indeed! I am not recovering from anything, I am perfectly healthy, perfectly normal." His Friend smiled gently and said, "Come, let us sit over here where we can watch the swans and the other water fowl, and we can give you an insight into the new life which is before you."

Somewhat reluctantly, and still bristling with anger at the thought that he was "ill",

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Algernon permitted himself to be led to a nearby seat. They sat down and the Friend said, "Rest comfortably, I have much to tell you because now you are upon another world, you are now in another plane of existence, and the more attention you pay to me the more easily will you progress through this world."

Algernon was highly impressed that the park seat was so comfortable, it seemed to be form-fitting, quite unlike the parks he had known in London where, if one was unfortunate, one could obtain a splinter if one shuffled about on the seat.

Before them the water shone blue and on it dazzling white swans glided majestically. The air was warm and vibrant. Then a sudden thought struck Algernon, a thought so sudden and so shocking that he almost jumped from the seat; there were no shadows! He looked up and found there was no sun either. The whole sky was glowing.

The Friend said, "Now we should talk about things because I have to teach you about this world before you enter the Rest Home." Algernon broke in, "I am absolutely amazed that you should be wearing a yellow robe. Are you the member of some cult or society, or of some religious Order?"

"Oh good gracious me, what an extraordinary attitude of mind you have! What does it matter the color of my robe? What does it matter that I wear a robe? I wear a robe because I want to wear a robe, because I find it suitable for me, because it is a uniform for the task I do." He smiled and pointed at Algernon's attire. "You wear a uniform, dark blue trousers, bright red jacket, and a peculiar pill box hat upon your head. You wear a white belt around your waist. Well, why are you dressed in such a remarkable fashion? You dress as you want to dress. No one here will take you to task for the way you dress. Similarly I dress in the style which suits me and because it is my uniform. But — we are wasting time."

Algernon felt definitely chastened by it, and as he looked about he could see certain other yellow-robed persons in conversation with men and women who wore quite outlandish attire. But his companion was speaking: "I must tell you," said his companion, "that upon Earth you are gravely misinformed about the truth of life and about the truth of life hereafter. Your religious leaders are like a gang of people who have got together, or like a gang of advertisers, each advertising his own wares and everyone of them completely oblivious to the truth of life and after life: He paused and looked about, and then continued, "Look at all these people here, can you tell who is a Christian, who a Jew, a Buddhist or a Moslem? They all look the same, don't they? And, in fact, all these people that you see in this park except those with yellow robes have one thing in common; they have all committed suicide."

Algernon recoiled in shock — all committed suicide—Then, he thought, possibly he was in a Home for the insane and perhaps the man in the yellow robe was a Keeper. He thought of all the strange things that had happened to him and which imposed a strain upon his credulity.

"You must be aware that to commit suicide is a very, very grave crime. No one should commit suicide. There are no reasons whatever for suicide, and if people knew

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what they have to endure after suicide they would have more sense. This," the companion said, "is a reception center where those who have committed *felo de se* are rehabilitated, counseled, and returned to Earth in another body. I am going to tell you first about life on Earth and in this plane of existence."

They settled themselves more comfortably on the seat, and Algernon watched the swans idly gliding about on the pond. He noted there were many birds in the trees, squirrels too, and he also observed with interest that other yellow robed men and women were talking to their charges.

"Earth is a school of learning where people go to learn through hardship when they will not learn through kindness. People go to Earth as people on Earth go to school, and before going down to the Earth the entities who are going to take over an Earth body are advised on the best type of body and the best conditions to enable them to learn that which they have gone to learn, or to be more precise, to learn that for which they are actually going to Earth because, of course, they are advised before departing. You will experience this yourself, so let me tell you about this particular plane. Here we have what is known as the lower astral. Its transient population is made up exclusively of suicides because, as I said, suicide is a crime and those who commit suicide are mentally unstable. In your own case you committed suicide because you were unable to become a father, because you had been mutilated, but that is a condition which you went to Earth to endure and to learn to surmount. I say to you very seriously that before you did go to Earth you arranged that you would be mutilated, and so it means that you have failed your test, it means that you have to start again and go through all that suffering once more, or more than once if you fail another time."

Algernon felt decidedly gloomy. He had thought that he was doing the noble thing in terminating what he imagined to be a useless life, and now he was told he had committed a crime and would have to atone for it. But his companion was speaking:

"This, the lower astral, is very close to the Earth-plane. It is about as low as one can get without actually returning to the Earth. Here we shall place you in a Rest Home for treatment. It will be an attempt to stabilize your mental state, it will be an attempt to strengthen you for your quite definite return to Earth as soon as conditions are suitable. But here on this astral plane you can walk about if you want to, or if you so desire you can fly through the air by merely thinking of it. Similarly if you come to the conclusion that your attire is absurd, as indeed it is, then you can change that dress merely by thinking of what you would like to wear."

Algernon thought of a very nice suit which he had once seen in a hot clime. It seemed to be off-white, lightweight and smartly cut. There was a sudden rustle and he looked down in alarm as his uniform vanished from him leaving him naked. With a shout of alarm he jumped to his feet clasping his hands over a strategic area, but no sooner was he on his feet than he found that other clothing adorned him, the clothing of his imagination. Sheepishly, blushing profusely he sat down again.

"Here you will find that you need no food although if you have gluttonous impulses you can have food, any food you wish. You merely think about it and it is materialized out

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of the nourishment in the atmosphere. Think, for instance, of your favorite dish."

Algernon pondered for a moment or two, then he thought of roast beef, roast potatoes, Yorkshire pudding, carrots, turnips, cabbage, a very large glass of cider, and a big cigar with which to end the repast. As he thought about it a vague shape appeared in front of him, solidified and hardened into a table covered with a dazzling white table cloth. Then hands and forearms appeared and dishes were placed before him, silver tureens, crystal decanters, and one by one the lids were lifted from the tureens and Algernon saw before him —and smelled — the food of his choice. His companion just waved his hands, and all the food and table disappeared.

"There really is no need for such theatrical things, there is no need for this coarse type of food because here upon this astral plane the body absorbs food from the atmosphere. There is, as you see, no sun shining in the sky, but the whole sky is glittering and from the sky every person gets all the nourishment needed. Here we have no very thin people, no very fat people, but everyone is as the body demands."

Algernon looked about and found that that was undeniably correct. There were no fat people, there were no thin people, there were no dwarfs, there were no giants, everyone appeared to be remarkably well formed. Some of the people strolling by had deep furrows of concentration on their foreheads wondering, no doubt, about the future, worrying about the past, and regretting foolish actions.

The companion rose to his feet and said, "Now we must go to the Home of Rest. We will continue our talk as we stroll along. Your arrival was somewhat precipitate and, although we are always alert for suicides, you had thought about it for so long that you — ah — took us rather unawares when you made that last desperate gash."

Algernon rose to his feet and reluctantly followed his companion. Together they strolled along the path flanking the pond, together they went by little groups of people engaged in conversation. Every so often one pair would rise to their feet and walk off just as Algernon and his companion had risen to their feet and walked off.

"Here you have comfortable conditions because in this stage of the proceedings you have to be, as it were, reconditioned for a return to the hardships and the sufferings of Earth, but remember that life upon Earth is just as the blink of an eyelid in what is actually the Real Time, and when you have completed your life upon Earth, completed it successfully, you will note, you do not return to this place again but you bypass it and go to another phase of the astral planes, a plane depending upon your progress on Earth. Consider going to school on Earth; if you just get through your examinations you may be retained in the same class, but if you make a more successful grade in the examinations then you can be promoted, and if you make what we might term a cum laude then, indeed, you might be promoted even two grades. The same applies in the astral planes. You can be removed from the Earth at what you call "death" and taken to a certain astral plane, or if you do extremely well you can be taken to a much higher plane, and, of course, the higher you rise the better the conditions."

Algernon was greatly diverted by the changing scenery. They left the area of the

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pond and passed through a gap in a hedge. Before them stretched a beautifully kept lawn and sitting in chairs were groups of people listening to someone standing before them and obviously lecturing. But the companion made no pause, he continued straight on and soon they came to a rise in the ground which they ascended, and before them there was a most beautiful building, not white but slightly green-tinted, a restful color, a color that engendered tranquility and peace of mind. They arrived at a door which opened automatically in front of them, and they went into a well lighted hall.

Algernon looked about him with vast interest. He had never seen such a beautiful place, and he, one of the upper crust of English society, thought he was rather a connoisseur of the beauty of buildings. There seemed to be soaring columns and many corridors leading off this main reception vestibule. In the center of the space there seemed to be a round desk at which a number of people were sitting. The companion with Algernon went forward and said, "This is our friend, Algernon St. Clair de Bonkers. You were expecting him and I believe you have assigned a room to him."

There was a quick riffling of papers and a young woman said, "Yes, that is correct, sir, I will have him shown to his room." Immediately a young man got up and walked towards them. "I will take you to your room, please follow me," he said. The companion bowed briefly in Algernon's direction, turned and left the building. Algernon followed his new guide along a softly carpeted corridor and then turned into a very spacious room, a room which contained a bed, table and had two other smaller rooms adjoining.

"Now, sir, you will kindly get into bed and a medical team will come and examine you. You are not permitted to leave this room until the doctor assigned to you so permits." He smiled and left the room. Algernon looked about him, and then went into the other two rooms. One seemed to be a living room with a comfortable couch and chairs, and the other — well — it was a very bare little room with a hard floor and a hard chair, and nothing more. Algernon suddenly thought, "Oh, apparently there are no toilet facilities here."

And then the thought occurred to him why should there be toilet facilities — he certainly had not felt any urge to use such facilities and perhaps they did not do such things in this place!

Algernon stood beside the bed and wondered what to do. Should he try to escape from the place? He went to the French windows and found that they would open freely, but when he tried to move out — no — there was some invisible barrier preventing him. Incipient panic departed from him and he moved back to the bed and started to remove his clothing. Then he thought, "What shall I do without night attire?" As he thought that he heard and felt again that rustling, and looking down he found that he was dressed in a long white nightgown suitable to the period of his sojourn upon Earth. He raised his eyebrows in considerable astonishment, and then slowly, thoughtfully, got into bed. Minutes later there was a discreet knock at the door. Algernon called "Come in", and three people did so, two men and a woman.

They introduced themselves as members of a rehabilitation team assigned to him. They sat down, and to Algernon's astonishment no stethoscope or sounding sticks were

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used, no pulse was felt. Instead they just looked at him and one started to talk:

"You are here because you have committed the grave crime of suicide whereby the whole of your life upon Earth has been wasted, and so you will have to start again and undergo fresh experiences in the hope that this next time you will succeed without committing the crime of suicide."

The man went on to say that Algernon would be subjected to special soothing rays in the hope that his health would speedily improve. He was told that it was necessary for him to return to Earth as quickly as possible. The sooner he returned to Earth the easier it would be for him.

"But how can I return to Earth?" exclaimed Algernon. "I am dead, or at least my physical body is dead, so how do you think you can put me back in it?"

The young woman answered, "Yes, but you are under grave misconceptions because of the perfectly appalling stuff you have been taught upon the Earth. The physical body is merely a garment which the spirit dons in order that specially low tasks may be accomplished, in order that certain hard lessons may be learned because the spirit itself cannot experience such low vibrations and so has to take on garb which permits it to experience things. You will go to Earth and be born to parents who will be chosen for you.

You will be born in conditions which will enable you to most profit by your Earth experience, and," she said, "remember that what we imply by profiting does not necessarily mean money because some of the more spiritual people on Earth are poor, while the wealthy are wicked. It depends on what one has to do, and it is thought that in your case you have been brought up to such wealth and comfort and it failed you that this time you should have poorer conditions."

They talked for some time, and Algernon gradually got a grasp of the very different conditions from those which he had been led to believe. Soon he could realize that Christianity was just a name, Judaism was just a name, as were the names of Buddhism, the Moslem, the Islamic and other beliefs, and really there was only one religion, a religion which as yet he could not comprehend.

The three people departed, and within the room the light faded. It was as though night had closed in on Algernon. He rested comfortably, he lost consciousness, and slept, and slept, and slept for he did not know how long, it may have been minutes, it may have been hours, it may have been days. But Algernon slept, and as he did so his spirit was revived and health flowed into him.

CHAPTER FOUR

ALGERNON awakened in the morning to bright sunshine and the sounds of birds singing in the branches of trees. Bright sunshine? Algernon remembered with a start that this was not sunshine. Here there was no sun, the air itself was alive. He pushed aside the coverlet and swung his feet out on to the floor, and walked to the window.

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Outside everything was as bright and as cheerful as it had been yesterday— WAS it yesterday? Algernon was completely disoriented, he did not know if there were days or nights, there seemed to be no record of the passing of time. He went back to his bed and lay down upon the coverlet with his hands at the back of his head while he thought of all that had happened.

Again there came a discreet knock at the door, and at his bidding a man entered, a very serious looking man, one who appeared most thoroughly to know his duties. "I have come to talk to you," he said, "because we fear that you are in grave doubt as to the reality of what you are experiencing."

Algernon put his hands by his side and with his military training he almost "lay to attention" as though he were in a military hospital. "Everything I have seen, sir," he said, "contradicts the teachings of the Christian Church. I expected to be met by angels, I expected them to be playing harps, I expected to see Pearly Gates and cherubim, but instead I find that the place might well be a glorified Green Park or Hyde Park, or any well-kept park. I might also," he said, "have been experiencing hallucinations in Richmond Park."

The new doctor laughed and said, "Well, you are not a particularly strong Christian. If you had been, let us say, a Roman Catholic and you really *believed* in your religion then you would have seen angels when you came here, and you would have seen those angels until the falsity of their appearance made you instead realize that they were but phantoms of your imagination. Here we deal in reality. Because you are an experienced man of the world, because you have been a soldier and have seen death as well as life, you could see us as we really are."

Algernon thought of some of the scenes from his past. "Death," he said, "I am most intrigued by this matter because death is such a thing of terror on Earth, people are desperately afraid to die. And a matter which has always amused me greatly is that the more religious a person, the more greatly they feel terror at even the thought of death." He smiled and clasped his hands and continued. "I have a very revered friend, a most ardent Catholic, who, whenever he hears that a person is ill and near death will always say how glad he is that poor Mr. So-and-So is getting better and is in such good health! But tell me, sir," said Algernon, "why is it that if there is life after death that people fear death?"

The doctor smiled at him rather quizzically and said, "Well, I should have thought that a man of your education and experience and perceptions would have realized the answer. As obviously you have not, let me explain; people go to Earth to accomplish certain things, to learn certain things, to experience certain hardships that the spirit or soul or Overself — call it what you will — may be purified and strengthened thereby. So if a person commits suicide then it is a crime against the program, against the plan of things. And if people saw how natural death is and how it is just birth into another stage of evolution then they would be wanting to die all over the place and the whole purpose of Earth and other worlds would be lost."

Certainly this was a new thought to Algernon although, indeed, a logical one. But

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still he was not satisfied; "Then am I to understand that the fear of death is artificially induced and is wholly illogical?" he asked.

"Yes indeed," said the doctor. "It is a provision of Nature that everyone shall fear death, everyone shall do everything they can to preserve life so that the experiences on the Earth may be maintained and carried through to their logical and predetermined result. So if a person commits suicide then they are throwing everything out of gear. Mind you," he said, "when the time for a natural death comes there is normally no fear, there is normally no pain because people in another realm of the astral can say when a person is due to die or, as we prefer, undergo transition, and as that time approaches a form of anesthesia is generated and instead of the pangs of death there are pleasant thoughts, thoughts of release, thoughts of going Home."

Algernon started up in some indignation. "Oh, but that cannot be," he said, "for people who are dying often twitch and thresh about and are obviously in very great pain indeed."

The doctor shook his head sadly; "No, no," he said, "you are in error. When the person is dying there is no pain, but release from pain. The body may twitch, the body may groan, but that is merely an automatic reaction from certain stimulated nerves. It does not at all mean that the person is enduring pain. The onlooker usually is no judge of what is going on. The conscious part which is about to undergo transition is divorced from the physical part which is the mere animal being. So — wait!" he said, "when you committed suicide you felt no pain, did you?" Algernon rubbed his chin deep in thought, and then he replied hesitantly, "Well, no, I suppose I did not. I cannot remember having felt anything except an extremely cold sensation and then nothing more. No sir, perhaps you are right, come to think of it, no, I did not feel any pain, I felt bemused, I felt wondering."

The doctor laughed and wrung his hands saying, "Ah, now I have you! You admit you felt no pain, and yet you were screaming like a stuck pig. And, by the way, with a stuck pig all you get is the air in the lungs being expelled rapidly and agitating the vocal chords so that one gets a high pitched squeal. There was the same sort of reaction with you, a long high pitched squeal interrupted by the bubbling of your blood as it emerged copiously from the slash in your throat. It was the high pitched squeal which brought the unfortunate serving maid into the bathroom."

Yes, it seemed logical enough now. Algernon was beginning to see that this was not hallucination but fact, and then he said, "But I understood that when a person died he would immediately be taken before God to be judged. He would immediately see Jesus and perhaps the Holy Mother and the disciples."

The doctor shook his head sadly, and replied, "But you say you thought you would see Jesus; supposing you had been a Jew, supposing you had been a Moslem, supposing you had been a Buddhist, would you still expect to see Jesus or do you think that in Heaven the place is divided up into separate countries where people of each religion go? No, the whole idea is absurd, nonsense, criminal folly, and foolish preachers on Earth really pollute the population with their horrendous legends. People come here and they think

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they are in hell. There IS no hell — except Earth!"

Algernon really jumped. He felt his body twitch as though on fire. "Oh, then am I in Heaven?" he asked.

"No, indeed not," replied the doctor. "There is no such place. There is no Heaven, there is no hell, but there is purgatory. Purgatory is a place where you purge your sins and that is what you are doing here. Here you will shortly be met by a committee who will help you to decide what you are going to do when you return to Earth. You have to return to Earth to live out the plan which you yourself have made, and, actually, that is why I came here now, to see if you are ready to be presented before the committee."

Algernon felt a twinge of fear, he felt as though icy fingers were going up his spine. It sounded worse than an army medical board in which doctors probed and prodded and asked the most embarrassing questions about one's reactions to this and that, and how one was going to manage about a sex life, and was he married, had he a girl friend? No, Algernon could not summon any enthusiasm whatever for going before a board of — what?

"Well," he said, "surely I am to be given time to recover somewhat from the extreme trauma of passing over from life to This. Admitted that I came here of my own volition through committing suicide which appears to be such a heinous crime, but I still think that I should be given some time to recover and to see what I want to do. And while I am on the subject," he said, "how can suicide be such a heinous crime if people do not know that they are committing a crime? I always understood that if a person was not conscious of doing ill then he could not be punished for so doing."

"Oh nonsense!" exclaimed the doctor. "You are like all those of your ilk who think that because you come of a higher class you are entitled to special consideration. You always try to rationalize. It seems to be a vice of your type. You knew perfectly well that it was wrong to commit suicide, even your own peculiar form of religion as taught down there instills in you that self-destruction is a crime against the person, against the state, and against the church."

Algernon looked frightfully sour and said, "Then how do you account for Japanese who commit suicide if things go wrong with them? If a Japanese man thinks he has lost face then he disembowels himself publicly. That's suicide, isn't it? He is doing what he believes, isn't he?"

The doctor looked most distressed and replied, "It does not alter the matter in the slightest that it has become a social custom in Japan to destroy oneself rather than face embarrassment. Let me tell you; let me get this rammed into your subconscious; suicide is NEVER right. Suicide is ALWAYS a crime. There are never any extenuating circumstances for committing suicide. It means that a person is not evolved enough to continue that which they took on of their own volition. But let us waste no more time," he said, "you are not here for a holiday, you are here so that we may help you make the most of your forthcoming life on Earth. Come!"

He rose abruptly and stood over Algernon who bleated plaintively, "Well, don't I

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get a chance to have a bath? Don't I have any breakfast before I am dragged away?"

"Bosh!" exclaimed the doctor in irritation. "Here you do not need a bath, here you do not need food. You are cleansed and fed by the atmosphere itself. You are begging the question because you appear to be not much of a man, just one who tries to evade all his responsibilities. Come with me."

The doctor turned and made for the door. Very, very reluctantly indeed Algernon rose slowly to his feet and followed him. The doctor led the way out. They turned to the right and entered a garden which Algernon had not previously seen. The atmosphere was wonderful, there were birds in the air and many pleasant animals lying around, and then as the doctor and Algernon turned a corner there appeared another building. It looked as though it were a cathedral, there were spires to it, and this time instead of a ramp going up there were many, many steps. They climbed the steps and went in to the cool recesses of a mighty building.

Many people occupied the entrance, there were people sitting on comfortable benches around the walls. Again, in the center of the vestibule, there was what seemed to be a reception desk, circular as before but this time it was staffed by much older people. The doctor led Algernon up and said, "We have come to go before the Council."

One of the assistants rose to his feet and said, "Please follow me." With the assistant leading the way, the doctor and Algernon followed. After a short walk down a corridor they turned left into an anteroom. The assistant said, "Wait here, please," while he continued and knocked on a door and entered when bidden to do so. The door closed behind him and there could be heard the very faint murmur of voices.

Some moments later the assistant came out again and held the door open, saying, "You may enter now" The doctor jumped to his feet and took Algernon by an arm and led him in.

Involuntarily Algernon stopped in astonishment when he entered the room. It was a very large room indeed, and in the center there was a globe slowly turning, a globe with blues and greens. Instinctively Algernon knew that this was a simulacrum of the Earth. He was both fascinated and intrigued to see that the Earth-globe was turning, turning without visible means of support. He seemed to be in space gazing down upon the Earth which was illuminated by some unseen sun.

There was a long table, very highly polished, very intricately carved, and at one end of the table a very old man was sitting, white-haired, white-bearded. He looked benign but yet at the same time he gave an impression of sternness. He gave the impression that should the occasion warrant it he could be a very tough person indeed.

Algernon took a fleeting glance, and there seemed to be eight other people sitting at the table, four were men and four were women. The doctor led him to a seat at the foot of the table. The table, Algernon saw, was so arranged, so shaped that the other members could all see him without even turning in their chairs and briefly he wondered at the craftsmanship which could have worked out such intricate geometry.

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The doctor said, "This is Algernon St. Clair de Bonkers. We have determined that he has reached a state of recovery which will enable him to profit by your advice. I present to you Algernon St. Clair de Bonkers."

The old man at the head of the table nodded briefly for them to sit down. Then he said, "Algernon St. Clair de Bonkers you are here because you have committed the crime of suicide. You killed yourself in spite of the plans you had made and in defiance of Higher Law. Do you wish to say anything in your defense first?"

Algernon cleared his throat and shivered. The doctor leaned across and whispered, "Stand up!" Reluctantly Algernon got to his feet and said rather defiantly, "If I made an arrangement to do a certain task, and if conditions not of my choosing made it impossible for me to do that task then surely, my life being my own, I have every right to terminate it if I so choose. I did not decide to come to this place. I decided merely to terminate my life." So saying he sat down with a defiant thump.

The doctor looked at him sadly. The old man at the head of the table looked at him with great sorrow, and the four men and the four women looked at him with compassion as if they had heard it all before. Then the old man said, "You made your plan, but your life is not your own. Your life belongs to your Overself — that which you call your soul — and you have injured your Overself by your recalcitrance and by your foolish method of depriving your Overself of its puppet. Because of this you will have to return to Earth and live a whole life again, and this time be sure you do not commit suicide. Now we have to decide the best time for you to return, and the best type of conditions for you, and to find suitable parents."

There was considerable rustling of papers, and one member rose from his seat and moved closer to the globe. For some moments he stood there looking at the globe but saying nothing. Then, still silent, he moved back to his place at the side of the table and made a notation on his papers.

"Algernon," said the old man, "you went down to Earth in conditions of great comfort. You went down to an old established family where all your creature comforts were attended to. You had every possible consideration. Money was no object. Your education was of the very best obtainable in your country. But have you thought of the harm that you have done in your life? Have you thought of the brutality, have you thought how you used to strike servants? Have you thought of the young maid servants you have seduced?"

Algernon jumped to his feet in indignation. "Sir!" he exclaimed heatedly, "I was always told that the maid servants were there for an unmarried son's convenience, to be his playthings, to learn about sex. I have done no wrong no matter how many maid servants I have seduced!" He sat down, fairly seething with indignation.

"Algernon, you know better," said the old man, "you know yourself that class, as you believe in it, is merely an artificial thing. On your world if a person has money or comes from an old family which has been favored then they have a lot of concessions. Whereas if a person is poor and has to work for one of these other families they are

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denied concessions and treated as inferior creatures. You know the law as well as anyone, for you have lived many times and you have all this knowledge within your subconsciousness."

One of the women sitting at the table pursed her lips as though she had just tasted an extremely sour gooseberry, and she said primly, "I wish to put on record my opinion that this young man should restart his life as one of the underprivileged. He has had everything his own way. I think he should start again as the son of a lesser tradesman or even the son of a cowherd."

Algernon jumped to his feet in fury. "How dare you say things like that!" he shouted. "Do you know that blue blood runs in my veins? Do you know that my ancestors went on the Crusades? My family is one of the most respected families."

He was interrupted in midstream of his speech, as it were by the elderly chairman who said. "Now, now, let us not have arguments here. It will do you no good at all. It will merely add to the load which you have to bear. We are trying to help you, not to add to your Karma, but to help you to lessen it."

Algernon broke in truculently, "Well, I am not having anyone say things about my forebears. I suppose yours," pointing an irate finger at the woman who had spoken, "came from brothel keepers or whore house managers, or something. Pah!"

The doctor firmly grasped Algernon's arm and pulled him down into the chair, saying, "Be quiet, you clown, you are making things so much worse for yourself. You don't know the first thing about this place yet, keep quiet and hear what is said."

Algernon subsided with the thought that he was indeed in purgatory as he had already been told, but then he listened to the chairman who said, "Algernon, you are treating us as though we were your enemies. Such is not the case. You are not here as an honored guest, you know. You are here as one who has committed a crime, and before we go any further in this matter there is one thing I want to make clear; there is no such thing as blue blood in one's veins. There is no such thing as inheriting class or caste or status. You have been brainwashed, you are bemused by the legends and fairy tales that you have been told." He stopped for a moment to take a sip of water, and then he looked at the other members of the Board before continuing.

"You must have in your mind the definite, definite thought that entities from many many worlds, from many many planes of existence go down to Earth, one of the lowest of the worlds, to learn by hardship that which they seem incapable of learning by kindness. And when one goes down to the Earth one adopts the body most suited for the fulfillment of one's task. If you were an actor you would realize that you are just a man, the actor, and you may be called upon to play many many parts in a lifetime. So during a lifetime as an actor you may have to dress as a prince or a king or as a beggar. As a king you may have to pretend that you are of the Blood Royal, but it is pretence only. Everyone in the theater really knows it. Some actors get carried away so much – as you have – that they really believe they are princes or kings, but they never want to be beggars. Now no matter who you are, no matter how high your degree of evolution, when you

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come here it is because you have committed the crime, and indeed a crime it is, of suicide. You come here so that you can atone for your crime. You come here so that we, in touch with higher planes, and also in touch with the Earth itself, can suggest how best that atonement may be fulfilled."

Algernon did not look at all happy. "Well, how did I know it was wrong to commit suicide, and what are you going to say about the Japanese who commit suicide for honor?" he asked, still with considerable truculence. The chairman said, "Suicide is never the correct thing to do. It is not even correct when Buddhist priests or Shinto priests set themselves on fire or disembowel themselves or throw themselves off cliff tops. Man-made laws can never override the laws of the Universe. But listen to me."

The chairman looked down at his papers and said, "You were going to live until you were a certain age, and you ended your life on Earth thirty years before that age, and thus it is that you have to return to Earth to live thirty years and then die to the Earth, and the two lives, the one which you terminated and the one to which you are now going, will merely count as one – what shall I call it? Let us call it a class session."

Another of the women fluttered a hand to attract the chairman's notice; "Yes, madam?" he queried. "You have a comment?"

"Yes I do, sir," she said, "I think the young man doesn't at all realize his position. He thinks he is so terribly superior to everyone else. I think perhaps he should be told of the deaths he has caused. I think he should be told more of his past."

"Yes, yes, but as you are so very well aware, he is going to see his past in the Hall of Memories," said the somewhat irritated chairman.

"But Mr. Chairman," said the woman, "the Hall of Memories interlude comes after, and we want this young man to listen to us now sanely – if such a thing is possible in such a young man," she said, darting a dark glance at Algernon. "I think that he should be told more of his position now."

The chairman sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Very well, as it is your wish we will alter our routine and I suggest that we take the young man to the Hall of Memories now so that he can see what makes us less than enamored of his self-styled attainments."

There was a shuffling of chairs as they were pushed back, and the members of the Board rose to their feet. The doctor also rose in some dismay and said, "Come on, you've asked for it," to Algernon.

Algernon looked quite indignantly from one to the other and rasped, "Well, I didn't ask to come to this place. I don't know what you are all making such a commotion for. If I have to get back to Earth let me get back and get on with it."

The chairman said, "We will now accompany you to the Hall of Memories. There you will be able to judge whether we are exceeding our authority as you seem to imagine, or whether we are being lenient. Come!" So saying he turned and led the way out of the large chamber, and into the open again. It was so refreshing out in the open, the

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living atmosphere, the birds and the friendly bees which went buzzing by. Here there were no insects to bite or to pester, but only insects which added what one might term a familiar music to the surroundings.

The chairman and the other members of the Board let the way, almost like a school treat, thought Algernon, except that it's no treat for me. And then he glanced sideways at the doctor and said, "It seems you are my jailer, eh?" The doctor did not reply. Instead he just grasped Algernon's arm more firmly and together they walked on.

Soon they came to another building. Algernon at first sight exclaimed, "Oh, the Albert Hall, how did we get back in London?" The doctor laughed — he really was amused — "This is no Albert Hall," he said, "look at the difference in architecture. This place is BEAUTIFUL!"

Together they entered the Hall, and it was, as the doctor had said, "beautiful". The chairman led the way in to some inner recesses. Algernon guessed from the time that they were walking that they must be right in the heart of the building. Then a door was opened and Algernon gasped and drew back in such a hurry that he bumped into the doctor who laughed and said, "Oh no, this is not the edge of the Universe, you can't fall, it's perfectly normal. Just compose yourself, there is nothing dangerous to happen."

The chairman turned to Algernon and said, "Walk forward, young man, walk forward, you will know when to stop, and pay great attention."

For a moment Algernon stood stock still, really frightened that he was going to fall over the edge of the Universe and tumble down along the stars at his feet. Then a very firm push in the small of his back propelled him forwards, and having started he found he couldn't stop.

Algernon walked forward, propelled by some force beyond his ken. He moved and as he did so shadows, forms and colors slid by him, shadows becoming more solid until in the end there was a definite obstruction. He came to a dead stop, again of no volition of his own. He looked about him in some confusion, and then a voice said, "Enter." Again through no conscious effort on his part Algernon moved forward and through what had seemed to be an impenetrable wall. There was a terrible traumatic feeling of falling. Then Algernon seemed to be disembodied, he was looking down at a scene. A nurse was holding out a baby which had just been delivered of his mother. A fierce looking gentleman was looking down at the baby, and then suddenly he twirled his moustaches and said to the nurse, "Hmm, horrible little creature, isn't it? Looks more like a drowned rat than what I hope will be a man. All right, nurse, take him away." The scene swirled, and then Algernon saw himself in a class room being taught by a tutor. He saw himself playing rather mean tricks on the tutor who could not say much about it because Algernon's father was an extremely autocratic aristocrat who regarded tutors and governesses and all employed people as menials beneath contempt.

Algernon looked down with horror at some of the things he had done, things which made him blush now. Then the picture changed again. He was older now, perhaps fourteen — he guessed himself to be between fourteen and fifteen — and he saw himself

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looking somewhat furtively out of a doorway in what was a fairly deserted part of the family manor. A pretty young maid servant came along and Algernon ducked back, and as she passed the door he leapt out and grabbed her around the throat, dragging her into the room. Quickly he locked the door and, still holding the maidservant by her throat to stop her from screaming, he ripped off her clothing. Algernon grew hot at the thought of what he had done.

Then again the scene changed. He was standing in his Father's study, the weeping maidservant was standing there as well. Algernon's father was twirling his moustaches and listening to what the girl had to say, and then he laughed harshly and said "My good heavens, woman, don't you understand that a young gentleman has to find out about sex, why do you think you are here? If you cannot accept a little thing like that get out of my house!" Imperiously he raised his hand and slapped the girl across the face. She turned and ran weeping from the room. The father turned to Algernon and said, "Hmm, so you've been blooded, young man, you are no longer a virgin, eh? Well, keep up the good work, get in your practice. I want to see many strong sons born to this house before I depart this world." So saying the father dismissed Algernon at a gesture.

The picture changed, and changed again. Eton, rowing on the river. Oxford, the Army, drilling men, and then overseas. War against the Boers. Algernon looked with horror at the pictures, he saw himself giving orders to his men to mow down a defenseless frightened family who did nothing but fail to understand an order in English because they spoke only Afrikaans. He saw the bodies flung in the ditch at the side of the road, and he saw himself laughing callously as a young girl was speared through the abdomen with a bayonet and tossed aside.

The pictures continued. Algernon was bathed in cold perspiration. He felt sick, he felt the most urgent desire to vomit but could not. He saw the total of deaths mount, seventy, seventy-four, seventy-eight. Seventy-eight deaths, and then just as he was going to kill the seventy-ninth another man, a sniper rose up and shot Algernon so that he was no longer a man.

The pictures went on until they seemed to have no more meaning for Algernon. He reeled away and leaned against a wall, and then without knowing how, without having made a movement of his own volition, he found himself again in company of the doctor and the members of the Board. They looked at him quizzically and then for a moment a flicker of compassion crossed the face of the chairman. But he merely said, "Well, let us get back to our discussion." He turned and led the way out of the Hall of Memories and back to the Board Room.

Again in the room the chairman said, "You have seen incidents of your life. You have seen that, blue blood or red blood, you have committed many crimes ending up by the crime of suicide. Now we have to decide, or rather we have to help you to decide what will be the best vocation by which you can atone for the harm that you have done in the viciousness of war and the crime which you have committed in suicide. Do you have any ideas what you would like to be?"

Algernon was very chastened. He felt very shaky, he felt worse than he could

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ever remember feeling before. He took his head in his hands and leaned his elbows on the table. The room was silent completely silent. Algernon sat there for an indefinite time thinking of all that he had seen, worse, thinking of all the things that he had seen of the acts which he had done, and he pondered what should he be? The thought occurred to him that possibly he should become a priest, clergyman, possibly a bishop, and with a bit of influence he might even rise to be an archbishop. But then from some- where he got such an impelling feeling of negation that he changed his line of thinking very quickly.

A veterinarian, he thought. But no, he did not like animals that much, and there wasn't much status in being a veterinarian, was there? It would be such a comedown, he thought, to one of his caste to be a mere veterinarian.

From somewhere he got the impression of silent laughter, laughter which mocked him, laughter which indicated to him that he was still on the wrong track. And then he thought that he would become a doctor, a fashionable doctor, he would work among the nobility, and possibly he could save seventy or eighty lives in his career and then he would have a clean sheet with which to start another life at the end of this, the impending one.

One of the men spoke for the first time. "We have, of course, been watching your thoughts in this globe," and he gestured to a globe let in to the table which Algernon had not seen before because it had been covered up, but now it was glowing and showing Algernon's thoughts. As Algernon blushed deeply at the realization that all he had thought had been revealed so the image in the globe blushed deeply also.

The chairman spoke, "Yes, I can thoroughly recommend that you become a doctor but I do not at all recommend that you become a society doctor. This is the plan which I would recommend in your case"

The chairman stopped and riffled through some papers, and then said, "You have taken life you have maimed and mutilated others." Algernon rose to his feet. "No! I have not maimed, I have not mutilated—"

The chairman interrupted, "Yes, by your orders others have been killed, others have been maimed and mutilated, and you bear the blame quite as much as the persons who actually did the acts. But you are listening to me, and you had better listen carefully for I shall not repeat what I am saying. You should become a doctor, but a doctor in a poor district where you can work among the poor, and you will start your life under poor conditions, no longer a member of the aristocracy but one who has to claw his way up. And in the thirtieth year of that life your life will be ended and you will return here if you repeat your suicide, or, if not you will go to a higher plane of the astral where you will be prepared according to how well you have performed in the life which you are about to undergo."

There was considerable discussion for some time, and then the chairman knocked with his gavel and said, "We will meet again to plan the parents you will have, to plan the area to which you shall be born, and to arrange the date. Until that time you may return to the House of Rest. The meeting is now adjourned."

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Algernon and the doctor walked somberly along the garden paths, neither saying a word, and then the doctor took Algernon into the House of Rest and showed him a suitable room, saying, "I will come back for you later when I am so instructed." With the briefest of nods he turned away and left, and Algernon sat in a chair with his head in his hands, the picture of misery, thinking of all that he had seen, thinking of all that he had done, and thinking, "Well, if this is purgatory thank goodness there is no hell!"

CHAPTER FIVE

ALGERNON ruffled his hair between his clenched fingers. He felt decidedly unhappy. Yes — well, he had committed suicide. Fine, he did it, now he was paying for it and he was going to pay for it some more. He sat there wondering where it was going to end, how it was going to end. He reviewed in his mind all the incidents which had occurred since he arrived on this, the plane of purgatory.

"So it's wrong to be an aristocrat, eh? It's wrong to be of blue blood, eh?" he muttered aloud to himself glowering down at the floor. Then he spun around at the opening of the door. At the vision which entered - a most attractive nurse — he rose to his feet his face beaming like the morning sun. "Ah!" he exulted, "an angel come to take me away from this benighted place!" He eyed the nurse with unconcealed eagerness saying, "What pulchritude in a place like this. What... ."

"Stop!" said the nurse, "I am quite immune to your blandishments. You men are all the same, you think of one thing only when you come to this plane, and I can tell you we women are thoroughly tired of all the come-ons which you try."

"Sit down," she said, "I have to talk to you and take you to a different place. But first of all I could not help hearing what you were mumbling about when I came in."

"After you, miss," said Algernon with much gallantry. The nurse sat and Algernon hastened to take his seat beside her. He was most piqued when she quickly moved her seat away so that she was facing him.

"Now, Fifty-Three," she said. Algernon held up his hand.

"You are mistaken, miss, I am not Fifty-three; I am Algernon St. Clair de Bonkers," he said.

The nurse sniffed audibly and tossed her head, "Don't be stupid," she replied, "you are not in a play now, you are here on this plane between acts as one might phrase it." She held up her hand to stop him from speaking, and then said, "There are two things in particular which I want to talk to you about first. One is that here you are not Algernon Whatever-It-Is but you are Number Fifty-Three. You are near enough a convict here, you have been convicted of the crime of suicide, and here you are referred to by the last two figures of your basic frequency, in your case Fifty-Three."

Poor Algernon felt his mind boggle. "Basic frequency?" he said, "I am afraid you are talking completely above my comprehension. I have not the slightest idea of what

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you are talking about. My name is Algernon and not Fifty-Three."

"You have a lot to learn, young man," the nurse retorted with some asperity. "You seem to be remarkably ignorant for a person who professes to be of near-royal blood, but let us deal with that first. You seem to think that because a particular act upon Earth made it necessary for you to be as a titled person that you carry it on over here. You do not!"

"Oh!" Algernon burst out, "you must be a Communist or something. You are adopting a Communist theme if you think that no one is entitled to their status — that all men are equal!"

The nurse sighed with resigned exasperation, and then tiredly said, "You are indeed ignorant, I am going to tell you here and now that Communism is a crime at least the equal of suicide because, whereas a person who commits suicide commits a crime against himself, yet Communism is a crime against the whole race, a crime against humanity. Communism, in fact, is as a cancer in the body of the world. We are not in favor of Communism, and in time — after much time — Communism will eventually be stamped out because it is founded on false precepts. But that is not what we are discussing."

She referred to some papers in her hands, raised her head and looked straight at Algernon saying, "We have to get you away from this dreadful idea that you have that because you were a titled person once you are always going to be a titled person. Let us consider things in the terms of the Earth."

Think of a writer who was down on that world some time ago; his name was Shakespeare. He wrote plays which are very familiar to you, and people act the parts which he wrote. Sometimes there will be a villain in the play, sometimes there will be a king portrayed, but I am going to put it to you quite bluntly that people would laugh to scorn any actor who, having played the king in Hamlet, went about for the rest of his life imagining that he was still a king in reality. People go down to the Earth to take that particular part in the play of life which will enable them to learn the tasks which they have to learn, and having learned their task and returned to the astral world, then, of course, they discard the imaginary identity and revert to their own natural identity which is determined by their own superior Overself."

Algernon — or rather, Fifty-Three from now on —shuddered, and replied "Oh dear, oh dear! I really do dislike bluestockings. When one has a beautiful young girl who starts preaching and teaching then really my emotions become quite turned off."

"Oh, how delightful!" said the nurse, "for I found your thoughts to be highly unpleasant, and I am glad indeed that I have dampened your very obvious lust."

She again referred to her notes, checking one paper against another, and then she said, "You have been sent to the wrong Home of Rest. I have to take you to another one which is of a more temporary nature because you are having to go back to the Earth at the earliest possible moment, you are, in fact, just a transient here and there is little that we can do for you except pass you on as quickly as we may. Please follow me."

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With that she rose to her feet and led the way to the door. Fifty-Three — ex Algernon! darted ahead of her and held the door open with a slightly mocking bow; "After you, madam, after you," he said.

The nurse swept in high dignity through the door and bumped into the doctor who was just about to enter. "Oops! Oh, I am so sorry, doctor, I did not see you," exclaimed the nurse.

"Oh, think nothing of it, nurse, think nothing of it. I was coming to collect number Fifty-Three because the Board wants to see him again. Do you have anything to say to him first?"

The nurse smiled at the doctor, and replied, "No, I shall be glad to get rid of him. He seems to be rather fresh for a man in his position. I have been trying to teach him that blue blood does not count here but at least it is a bit higher than one with Communist blood. But, doctor," the nurse said quickly, "after the Board has finished with him he has to go to the Home for Transients, there was a mix-up in the orders and I believe that that is why you brought him here. Will you see that he goes to the Home for Transients?"

The doctor nodded and said, "Yes, nurse, I will attend to it." Then he nodded to Fifty-Three and said, "Come along, we are late already." With that he turned and led the way down another corridor which Algernon? No, Fifty-Three, had not seen before. He, poor fellow, looked decidedly downcast and muttered, "Purgatory? This is purgatory all right, I'm sure I shall be several inches shorter by the time I get out of here. I've walked myself down to my knee joints almost!"

The doctor, who had caught his mutter, laughed delightedly and retorted, "Yes, indeed, you will be very, very much shorter when you leave here because you will be an infant inside its mother!"

The doctor and Fifty-Three turned into a long corridor. Two guards sat one on each side of the entrance. One nodded briefly to the doctor and said, "Is this Fifty-Three?"

"Yes it is," said the doctor. "Are you the one who is going to accompany us?"

The guard on the right-hand side rose to his feet and replied, "I am the one who goes with you so Let's not waste any more time, shall we?" Turning he strode down the corridor at quite a smart pace. Fifty-Three and the doctor had to step out briskly in order to keep up with him. They walked for quite a long way, Fifty-Three was horrified to see that no matter how far they walked the corridor seemed to stretch on endlessly, endlessly. But there came a diversion; there was a branching of the corridor. The guard, or guide, Fifty-Three wasn't sure which he was, took the left turn and went on a little further and then knocked smartly at a door, and stood back. "Come in," said a voice, and the guard quickly threw open the door so that first the doctor, then Fifty-Three and lastly the guard entered, the latter shutting the door firmly behind him. "Come and sit here, please," said a voice. Fifty-Three moved forward and took the seat indicated.

"Now we have to discuss your future. We want you to get back on Earth at the very earliest possible moment compatible with a woman's biological functions!" said the voice.

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Fifty-Three looked about him — he had been rather dazzled by the amount of light in the building, it seemed to be a very light building indeed and there were many flashing lights all over the place. One wall, he saw with some astonishment, appeared to be of frosted glass over which at intervals flickering colored lights passed quickly and vanished. He saw that he was in a room, the like of which he had never before envisaged. It appeared to be of a clinical austerity, not white but a very restful shade of green. About him there were five or six — he could not count them precisely — people dressed in greenish overalls. He was quite uncertain of the exact number of people about because it seemed at intervals some people came into the room and others disappeared from the room, but this was no time to be paying attention to trivia because the first man was speaking again.

"I have very carefully examined and considered all the information which has been put before me. I have gone very thoroughly into your past, your past before you went down to the Earth, and I find that although according to your lights you did fairly well on the Earth yet according to the mores and penates of the real life you were a failure and you compounded your failure by committing the crime of suicide. So now we want to help you." Fifty-Three looked dreadfully sour, and could not help bursting out, "Help me? Help me! Since I have been here I have been criticized, I have been reprimanded for almost everything, I have been reprimanded for being one of the upper class and I have been reprimanded for saying that perhaps I should have been a Communist. What AM I to believe? If I am here for punishment then why not get on with it?"

The elderly slender man with the gray hair sitting in front of Fifty-Three looked really distressed, and remarkably compassionate. "I am so sorry indeed that you feel like this," he said, "it is your attitude which is making everything so difficult for us because we have come to the inescapable conclusion that as you went to the Earth as a player in a rather exalted status that has affected your psyche, and so that makes it necessary that when you are sent back you will have to be sent back to rather poor conditions otherwise you are going to be quite intolerable and you are going to give your Overself absolutely false impressions. Do I make myself clear?" he asked.

Fifty-Three glowered and retorted, "No, definitely not, I just don't know what you are talking about when you talk about the Overself and all that. So far all I have been told is just a mass of gibberish, and I have no sense of guilt for what I have done. Therefore, according to English law, I have done no wrong!"

The elderly man felt his determination harden. It seemed to him that this man — this number Fifty-Three — was just being difficult for the sake of being difficult. "You are completely wrong in your reference to English law," the interrogator said, "Because if you knew anything at all about English law you would know that one statement is to the effect that ignorance of the law is no excuse, so that if you break the law of England and then you claim you did not know there was such a law then you are still found guilty because you should have acquainted yourself with the existence of such a law. And please do not try to be truculent with me because I am one of those who hold your destiny in my hands, and if you antagonize us too much then we can make your conditions hard indeed. Just pay attention and keep your truculence in check."

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Fifty-Three shuddered at the tone of the voice and recognized when he was defeated. He said, "Sir, but what am I to do when terms are used which have no meaning for me? What, for instance, is the Overself?"

"Later," said the interrogator, "you will be taught all about this. It will suffice for the moment if I say that your Overself is what you would refer to as your eternal, immortal soul, and you now are just a puppet or extension of that Overself, almost, as one might say, like a pseudopod — an extension from your Overself materialized into material substance so that you may learn by actual hard physical experience that which is unobtainable to the far more tenuous Overself."

Poor Fifty-Three felt his head reeling. He did not really understand any of this but he thought that as he had been told he would be instructed later he had better cut things short and now he should just listen. So he nodded dumbly in answer to the interrogator's raised eyebrows.

The interrogator, or perhaps a better word to use would be counselor, looked down at his papers and then said, "You have to return as a child of poor parents, those who are without social status, because the act which you have been called upon to play in your previous life seems seriously to have warped your understanding and your perceptions, and you place yourself into a class to which you are not entitled. We are going to suggest — and you have the right to refuse—that you are born to parents in London, in the area known as Tower Hamlets. There are some very suitable parents-to-be near Wapping High Street. You will have the advantage of being born quite close to the Tower of London and to the Mint and to very famous dock areas where there is shocking poverty and suffering. Here, if you agree, and if you have the moral and mental fiber, you can work your way up to be a physician or surgeon, and in saving the lives of those around you you can atone for the lives that you have taken and caused to be taken. But you will have to decide quickly because these women who we have chosen as prospective mothers for you are already pregnant, and that means we have no time to waste. I am going to show you," he said, "the area which will be your locale."

He turned and waved his hand to the wall which Fifty- Three had taken to be of glass, of frosted glass. As he did so it sprang into life, life in color, and Fifty-Three could see an area of London which he knew only indifferently. The River Thames, yes; Southwark Bridge London Bridge, and then the Bascules of Tower Bridge moved on to the screen. And to the side the Tower of London itself could be seen. He sat there quite enthralled, looking at the absolutely clear pictures, seeing traffic on the streets. He was most intrigued to see horseless carriages and very, very few horse-drawn vehicles indeed. He exclaimed on the matter, and the counselor said, "Oh yes, horse-drawn traffic has almost disappeared, things have changed considerably since you have been here, and you have been here quite a time, you know. You were unconscious for about three years. Now everything is motorized, motor buses, motor vans, and motor cars. Things are supposed to have improved but I personally deplore the passing of the horse from the streets."

Fifty-Three turned his attention to the picture again. Mint Street, Cable Street, Shadwell, East Smithfield, the Highway, Thomas More Street, St. Catherines, Wapping

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High Street, and Wapping Wall.

The counselor said, "Well, we have five women who are pregnant. I want you to choose which area you prefer of that shown. Of the five women one is the wife of an inn keeper, or I believe you might call him a publican. The second is the wife of a greengrocer. The third is the wife of an ironmonger. The fourth is the wife of a motor bus driver. And the fifth, she is again a lodging house keeper. I say again because the first one is an inn keeper. Now, you have a right of choice and no one will influence you. I can give you a list of them and you will have twenty-four hours upon which to meditate over this matter, and if you need any advice you merely have to ask."

Fifty-Three sat back and gazed at the living pictures on that wall, seeing people move about, seeing the strange costumes that women were now wearing, marveling at the horseless carriages going along, marveling too at the amount of building going on. Then he turned to the counselor and said, "Sir, I would ask you particularly that I be permitted to see the ten people, five fathers and five mothers, from whom I am expected to pick my parents. I would like to see them, I would like to see their home conditions."

The counselor, or interrogator, shook his head slowly with real regret: "Ah, my friend," he mourned, "that is a request beyond my ability to grant for we never, never do such a thing. We can merely give you the details and you make your choice. You are not permitted to see your parents for that would be an invasion of their privacy. Now I suggest you return to your Transit Hotel and think about the whole matter." So saying he bowed slightly to the doctor and to Fifty-Three, picked up his papers and left the room.

The doctor said, "Come, let us go," and rose to his feet. Fifty-Three rose reluctantly and followed him from the room. Together they retraced their steps accompanied by the guard. Together they went along that corridor which seemed so endless and which now seemed even longer. At last they came out into the open again, and Fifty-Three took a deep breath inhaling energy and life as he did so.

The guard left them to return to his post, and the doctor and Fifty-Three continued on to a fairly dull gray building which Fifty-Three had vaguely noticed before but passed off as of no interest. They entered the front door and a man at a desk said, "Third on the left," and took no more interest in them. They went on to "third on the left" and entered a bare room. There was a bed and a chair, and a small table on which Fifty-Three was interested to observe a large folder with the number 53 stamped on.

"Well, there it is," said the doctor. "You have twenty-four hours from now to ponder upon your decision and after that time I shall come for you and we will have to go and see what can be seen, and prepare you for going back to the Earth. Good-bye!" The doctor turned and made his way out of the room, shutting the door behind him, shutting the door on Fifty-Three who stood disconsolately in the middle of the room apprehensively fingering the pages enclosed within the folder marked 53.

Fifty-Three glowered at the closing door and put his hands behind his back. With head sunk upon his chest he paced the room, and paced, and paced. Hour after hour he walked about the room and then quite tired with the exertion he flung himself into a chair

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and gazed dourly through the window.

"Fifty-Three, eh?" he muttered to himself. "Like a convict, and all for doing something which I thought was good. What was the point of living a life as neither man nor woman?" He put his chin in his hands and crossed his legs and looked a typical picture of misery. Then he thought, "Or DID I think I was doing the right thing? They may have something in what they say, after all. I think it's very likely that I was giving way to self-pity, but here I am now given a number like a convict at Dartmoor and saddled with the decision of saying what I am going to be next. I don't know what I'm going to be. I don't know that it matters at all anyway, I shall probably end up again in this place.

He jumped to his feet again and went to the window, and thought he would take a walk around the garden. Carefully he pushed and the window swung open easily to his touch. He went to step outside and it was like stepping into a thin invisible sheet of rubber. It stretched enough to prevent him from getting a bruise, and then to his astonishment it just contracted and he was propelled gently and effortlessly back into the room. "Convict after all, eh." he said to himself. And then he sat down in the chair again.

For hour after hour he sat there thinking, wondering, in a state of complete indecision. "I thought that after death I would go to Heaven," he said to himself, and immediately followed by it, "Well no, I suppose I didn't think it at all. I didn't know what to think. I have seen so many people die and there has been no sign of a soul leaving the body, so I came to the conclusion that all this that the parsons yammer about, life after death etc., was hogwash." He jumped to his feet again and started the endless marching up and down the room thinking all the time and unconsciously talking to himself. "I remember in the mess one evening we were discussing it, and Captain Broadbreeches expressed the very determined view that when you were dead you were dead and That's all there was to it. He said of the men, women, children and horses he'd seen killed, but never, he told us, had he seen a soul rise out of a dead body and get winging heavenwards"

In his mind's eye he saw again life as it was in England while he was a schoolboy, and then when first he was a cadet. He saw himself as a newly commissioned officer, proudly getting on a ship to go and fight the Dutch. He used to think of the Boers as the Dutch because that was their original ethnic group — Dutch. But as he looked back he could see that the Boers were merely a group of farmers fighting for what they believed to be the right to choose their own way of life unfettered by domination from England.

The door opened and a man came in: "I do suggest, Number Fifty-Three, that you try to get some rest. You are merely wearing yourself out with this endless pacing around. In a few hours you will have to undergo a quite traumatic experience. The more rest you get now the easier will it be for you later on." Fifty-three turned sullenly towards him and in his best military manner said, "Get out!" The man shrugged his shoulders, turned and left the room, and Fifty-Three went on with his brooding and his pacing.

"What was this about the Kingdom of Heaven?" he said to himself. "The parsons always had this talk about other mansions, other planes of existence, other forms of life. I remember our Padre saying that until Christianity came to the Earth everyone was condemned to damnation, to eternal suffering, to eternal torments, and that only the Roman

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Catholics would go to Heaven. Now, I wonder how long the world has been in existence and why should all those people before Christianity be condemned when they didn't know that they had to be saved?" March — march — march. He went across the room, back again, across again, and back again endlessly. If he had been on a treadmill, he thought, he would have covered quite a number of miles going up steps, at least that would have been harder work than walking backwards and forwards across the room.

At last, angry and frustrated, he flung himself on the bed and lay there sprawling. This time no darkness descended, he just lay there full of hatred, full of bitter resentment, and the hot salt tears came spurting from his eyes. Furiously he tried to brush them away with the back of his hands, and then at last he turned on his face and had a spasm of sobbing into a pillow.

After what seemed to be several eternities there was a knock on the door which he ignored. The knock came again, and again he ignored it. After a decent interval the door was slowly opened and there was the doctor. He glanced in for a moment, and then said, "Ah, are you ready? Twenty-four hours have now elapsed."

Fifty-Three put a leg over the side of the bed, then lethargically put the other one over. Slowly he sat up. "Have you decided to which family you are going." asked the doctor.

"No dammit, no, I haven't given it a thought."

"Ah!" said the doctor, "so you are fighting every inch of the way, eh? Well, it doesn't matter to any of us, you know, although you will find it hard to believe. We are indeed trying to help you, and if you, by your procrastination miss this opportunity you will find that opportunities are fewer and fewer and the families get less and less".

The doctor went to the table and picked up the folder marked 53, and idly he flipped through it. "You have a choice of five families here," he said, "and some get no choice at all, some are just directed. Let me tell you something." He eased himself into the chair, leaned back and crossed his legs gazing sternly at Fifty-Three. Then he said, "You are like a spoilt child giving way to immature rage. You committed a crime, you messed up your life, now you have to pay for it, and we are trying to arrange that you pay for it on the most comfortable terms. But if you will not cooperate with us, and if you just insist on behaving like a spoilt baby then eventually you will come to the point when you have no choice where you can go. You may find yourself as the child of some under privileged black family in Mombassa, or possibly sent as a girl-child to a family in Calcutta. Girls in Calcutta are not worth much, people want boys — they can help—and as a girl-child you might find yourself sold into prostitution or into conditions where you are a virtual slave."

Poor Fifty-Three sat bolt upright on the edge of the bed, his hands very tightly grasping the edge of the mattress, his mouth wide open and his eyes wild and staring. He looked much like a wild animal that had just been captured and put in a cage for the first time. The doctor looked at him, but there was no sign of recognition, no sign that Fifty-Three had heard the remarks.

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"If you persist in your stupid recalcitrant attitude and make it so much more difficult for us, then as a last resort we may send you to an island where only lepers live. You have to live out the other thirty years which you skipped before, there are no two ways about it, there is no way of overcoming it, it is the Law of Nature. So you'd better come to your senses."

Fifty-Three sat there in an almost catatonic state. So the doctor got up, went to him and slapped his face, first one side and then the other. Fifty-Three jumped to his feet in rage and then slumped. "Well, what CAN I do?" he said, "I am being sent back to Earth as a member of one of a deplorably low form of life. I am not used to being of such low status."

The doctor looked truly sad, and then sat down on the bed beside Fifty-Three saying, "Look, my boy, you are making a grave mistake, you know. Supposing you were on Earth now and you were a member of the theatrical community. Suppose that you had been offered the part of King Lear, or Hamlet, or someone like that; well, possibly you would jump at such an opportunity. But then after the play was over, after the audience had gone, and after the producers had decided upon a new production, would you insist that you were King Lear or Othello or Hamlet? If you were offered the opportunity of being, for example, the Hunchback of Notre Dame or Falstaff, or someone of lesser status, would you say that such was unworthy of a person who had been King Lear or Hamlet or Othello?"

The doctor stopped speaking. Fifty-Three sat on the bed idly scraping the floor, scuffling the carpet - with a foot, and then he said, "But this is not playacting, I was living on Earth, I was a member of the upper class, and now you want me to be — what is it? The son of a publican, the son of a bus driver, or whatever!"

The doctor sighed, and then said, "You were upon Earth to live out a part. You picked, before you went to Earth, what you thought would be the best conditions for you to enable you to be a successful actor. Well, you failed. The act was a flop, so back you go to a different condition. You've gotta choice, in fact you have five choices. Some have no choice."

He jumped to his feet saying, "Come, we have dallied too long already and the council will be becoming impatient. Follow me." He moved to the door and then, on an impulse, turned back to the table and picked up the file marked 53. Tucking it under his left arm he reached out his right hand and grasped Fifty-Three by the arm, shaking him roughly.

"Come!" he said, "be a man. You are thinking all the time of how important you were as an officer. Surely an officer and a gentleman doesn't behave like this cowardly slobbering person that you have become?"

Sullenly Fifty-Three got to his feet and together they went to the door. Outside a man was just coming down the corridor. "Oh!" he said, "I was coming to see what had happened. I thought perhaps our friend was so overcome with sorrows that he couldn't get off his bed."

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"Patience, friend, patience," admonished the doctor, "we have to show tolerance in a case like this."

Together the three men walked along the corridor, back through that long tunnel again, past the watchful guards who this time just inspected them, and then they went on to the door.

"Come in," said the voice, and the three men entered the room. This time there was the elderly gray-haired man sitting at the head of the table and on either side of him there were two other people, one man and one woman, dressed in their long green coats. The three turned to look at Fifty-Three as he entered. The man at the head of the table raised his eyebrows and said, "Well? Have you decided which you should be?"

The doctor nudged Fifty-Three who was standing there in sullen silence. "Speak up," he whispered. "Can't you see they are losing patience with you?" Fifty-Three stepped forward and without being invited to do so slammed himself down in a chair.

"No," said he. "How can I decide? I have only the briefest details of these people. I have no idea of what conditions I will encounter. I know I find a publican as extremely distasteful, but possibly an ironmonger would be even more distasteful. I am quite ignorant of such people, never having encountered them on a social basis in my life. Perhaps you, sir, with your undoubted experience, would be prepared to advise me." Fifty-Three looked insolently at the man at the head of the table, but he just smiled tolerantly and said, "You are extremely class conscious, and I agree with you that the honorable trade of inn keeper or public house manager or ironmonger would be too much for your sub-conscious. I could indeed, though, very strongly recommend that eminent public house in Cable Street, but for one of your type given to too much snobbishness I will, instead, suggest another family, that of the greengrocer. The father is Martin Bond and the wife is Mary Bond. Mary Bond is almost of full term and if you are to take over the body of her as yet unborn child you must lose absolutely no more time, you must come to your senses and decide, for only you can decide."

"Greengrocer!" thought Fifty-Three. "Rotten potatoes, stinking onions, overripe tomatoes. Faugh! However did I get in a mess like this?" He twiddled his fingers, scratched his head and squirmed miserably in the chair. The others in the room kept quiet, they knew of the desperate state which one got into at having to make such a decision. At last Fifty-Three raised his head and said defiantly, "Well, I will take that family. They might find they've got a better man in their family than they ever had before!"

The woman sitting at the side of the table said, "Mr. Chairman, I think we should run a series of checks on him again because we have to see that he is still compatible with the mother. It would be a terrible thing for the woman if after all she has gone through her baby was stillborn."

The man at the other side of the table said, "Yes," and he turned to look at Fifty-Three. "If the child is stillborn that still does not help you because you would be returned here on the grounds that your lack of cooperation and your intransigence will have caused the woman to lose her child. I do suggest for your own sake — it really doesn't matter to

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us—that you cooperate more, that you try to make a more equable temperament, or you may find that we shall have to send you anywhere like garbage being thrown out."

The woman rose to her feet, hesitated a moment, then turned to Fifty-Three and said, "Come with me." The chairman nodded and also rose to his feet. The doctor touched Fifty-Three's arm and said, "Come along, this is it."

Reluctantly, like a man facing execution, Fifty-Three climbed sluggishly to his feet and followed the woman into a side room. Here things were very different. The whole walls seemed to be flickering lights behind frosted glass.

There seemed to be a remarkable number of knobs and buttons and switches. Fifty-Three thought for a moment that he had got himself into an electric power station, but then directly in front of him was a peculiarly shaped table, a very peculiarly shaped table indeed. It seemed to be the outline of a human figure, arms, legs, head and everything. The woman said, "Get on that table." For a moment Fifty-Three hesitated, then shrugging his shoulders he climbed on to the table brusquely brushing off the kindly hand of the doctor who tried to assist him. As he lay on the table he found a most peculiar sensation overtook him; the table seemed to mould itself to him. He had never felt more comfortable in his life. The table was warm. Looking up he found his sight was not so good as it had been, it was blurry. Faintly, indistinctly, he could make out shapes on the wall in front of him. Vaguely and strangely uninterested he gazed at the wall and thought he could distinguish a human form. It seemed to be a female form. At a rough guess Fifty-Three thought she was in bed, then as he watched through lack-lustre eyes he had an impression that someone was pulling back the bedclothes.

A distorted voice came to him, "It seems to be all right. I say he is compatible." It was very strange, very strange indeed. Fifty-Three had an impression that he was "going under" an anesthetic. There was no struggling, no apprehension, there was not even clear thought. Instead he lay there on that form-fitting table, lay there and gazed up uncomprehendingly at the people whom previously he had known so well. The doctor, the chairman, the woman.

Vaguely he was aware that they were saying things: "Compatible basic frequency." "Temperature inversion." "A period of synchronization and stabilization." And then he smiled drowsily and the world of purgatory slipped away from him and he knew no more of that world.

There was a long sounding silence, a silence which was not a silence, a silence when he could feel but not hear vibrations. And then suddenly it was as though he were thrust into a golden dawn. He saw before him a glory such as that which he could never remember having seen before. He seemed to be standing bemused and half-conscious in a glorious, glorious countryside. In the distance there were tall spires and towers and about him there were many people.

He had the impression that a very beautiful Figure came and stood beside him saying, "Be of good heart, my son, for you are going down to the world of sorrow again. Be of good heart for we shall be with you keeping contact. Remember you are never

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alone, never forgotten, and if you do that which your inner conscience dictates no harm will befall you but only that which has been ordained, and at the successful conclusion of your time upon the World of Sorrows you will return to us here triumphant. Rest, be tranquil, be at peace."

The Figure turned away and Fifty-Three turned over in his bed or table, or wherever he was, and slumbered, and was at peace. And he knew no more in his consciousness of that which had happened.

CHAPTER SIX

ALGERNON shuddered violently in his sleep. Algernon? Fifty-Three? Whoever it was now, he shuddered violently in his sleep. No, it was not sleep, it was the most terrible nightmare he had ever in his life experienced. He thought of an earthquake which had happened near Messina, Salonika, where buildings had toppled and where the earth had yawned and people had fallen through to be squashed flat as the earth, yawning, closed again.

This was terrible — terrible. This was the worst thing he could ever experience, the worst thing he had ever imagined. He felt that he was being mashed and squashed. For a time in his confused nightmare state he imagined that he had been caught by a boa constrictor in the Congo and was being forced willy nilly down the snake's throat.

All the world seemed to be upside-down. Everything seemed to be shaking. There was pain, convulsions, he felt pulverized, terrified.

From a distance away there came a muffled scream, a scream as heard through water and thick swadding. Barely conscious in his pain he made out, "Martin, Martin, get a taxi quickly, it's started."

He mulled over the name. "Martin? Martin?" He had a vague, but only a very vague recollection that at some time somewhere in some life he had heard that name before, but no, try as he would he could not bring back into his memory's recall what the name meant or to whom it was applied.

Conditions were just terrible. The squeezing went on. There was the horrid gurgling of fluids. For a moment he thought he had fallen into a sewer. The temperature increased and it was truly a shocking experience.

Suddenly, violently, he was upended and he was conscious of terrible pain in the back of his neck. There was a peculiar sensation of motion, nothing that he had ever experienced before. He felt suffocated, stifled, he felt as though immersed in fluid. "But that can't be, can it?" he thought, "Man can't live in fluid, not since we emerged from the sea anyhow."

The joggling and jolting continued for some time, and then at last there came a jolt and a very muffled bubbly voice snarled, "Careful man! Careful! Do you want her to have it here in the taxi?" There was some sort of mumble in reply but it was all dreadfully

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muffled. Algernon was nearly out of his mind with confusion, none of this made any sense to him, he just did not know where he was, did not know what was happening. Things had been quite fantastically terrible of late and it was no longer possible to act as a rational being. Dim memories floated into his consciousness.

Something about a knife somewhere, or was it a razor. That had been a terrible dream! He had dreamt that he had half hacked off his head, and then he had looked at himself while he was hanging halfway through the ceiling, upside down he was, too, looking at himself lying dead on the floor.

Ridiculous, completely absurd, of course, but — and what was this other nightmare? What was he now? He seemed to be some sort of a convict accused of some sort of a crime, he did not know what it was at all. The poor fellow was nearly out of his mind with confusion, with distress, and with fearful apprehension of impending doom.

But the joggling went on. "Careful now, careful I say, go easy there bear a hand behind will you". It was so muffled, so unreal, and the tones were so coarse. It reminded him of a costermonger he had heard once in some back street of Bermondsey in London. But what had Bermondsey got to do with him now, where was he? He tried to rub his head, tried to rub his eyes, but to his horror he found there was some cable or something encircling him. Once again he thought that he must be in a lower astral because his movements were constricted - this was just too terrible for contemplation. He seemed to be in a pool of water. Before it had seemed to be a sticky mess when he had been in the lower astral - or had he been in the lower astral? Dazedly he tried to force his reluctant aching mind to search along the paths of memory. But no, nothing was right, nothing would focus with clarity.

"Oh God!" he thought worriedly, "I must have gone mad and be in an asylum for that condition. I must be having living nightmares. This just can't possibly happen to any person at all. How could I, a member of such an old and respected family, have come down to this? We have always been respected for our poise and our sanity. Oh God! What has happened to me?"

There was a sudden jolt, a most inexplicable occurrence, a sudden jolt, and then the pains came again. Dimly he became aware of someone screaming. Normally, he thought, it would have been a high-pitched scream but now every- thing was muffled, everything was so incredibly strange, nothing made any sense any more. He lay back in wherever he was and found that this time he was on his face, and then a sudden convulsion of "something" whirled him about, and then he was on his back again shuddering with the whole fiber of his being, trembling in terror.

"I tremble?" he asked himself in horror. "I am nearly out of my mind with fear, I am an officer and a gentleman? What is this evil thing which has befallen me? Of a verity I must be suffering from some grave mental affliction. I fear for my future!"

He tried to clear his mind, he tried with all the mental power at his command to think what had happened, what was happening. All he got was confused improbable sensations, something about going before a Board, something about planning what he

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was going to do. And then he had been resting on a table — no, it was useless, his mind recoiled at the thought, and for a moment went blank.

Again there came a violent movement. Again he was convinced that he was in the coils of a boa constrictor being prepared for crushing and digestion. But there was nothing he could do about it. He was in a state of utter terror. Nothing seemed to be going right. How had he got in the clutches of the boa constrictor first, and how would he be in a place where there were such creatures? It was all beyond him.

A terrible screech muffled badly by his surroundings shook him to the core. Then there came a violent wrenching and tearing and he thought that his head was being torn from his body. "Oh my God!" he thought, "then it IS true, I DID cut my throat and my head is now falling away from me. Oh my God, what shall I do?"

Shockingly and with terrifying suddenness there was a gushing of water, and he found himself deposited on something yielding. He found himself gasping and struggling. He seemed to have a warm wet blanket over his face, then to his horror he found pulsations, pulsations, pulsations, strong urgings were forcing him through some very narrow, cloying, clinging channel, and something — it seemed to be a cord fixed around his middle — tried to hold him back. The cord he could feel twisting around one of his feet. He kicked violently to try to free it because here he was suffocating in humid darkness. He kicked again, and a wild screech, louder now, burst out from somewhere above and behind him.

There was a further terrific convulsion and twisting and he shot out of the darkness into a light so dazzling bright that he thought he had been struck blind on the spot. He could see nothing but from the very warm surroundings he had had now he was precipitated on to something rough and cold, the cold seemed to seep into his bones and he shivered.

To his amazement he found that he was sopping wet, and then "something" grasped him by the ankles and whisked him up into the air upside-down. There was a sharp "slap, slap!" across his buttocks and he opened his mouth to protest at the indignity, at the outrage perpetrated upon the helpless body of an officer and a gentleman. And with his first scream of rage all memory of the past faded from him as a dream fades at the opening of a new day, and a baby was born.

Of course not every baby has experiences such as this because the average baby is just an unconscious mass of protoplasm until it is born, and only when it is born does consciousness take over. But in the case of Algernon, or Fifty-Three, or whatever you want to call him, the matter was somewhat different because he had been a suicide, because he had been a very difficult "case" indeed, and there was an extra factor; this person - this entity — had to return with a special purpose in mind, he had to take up a special vocation and so the knowledge of what was that vocation had to be passed on from the astral world through the being-born baby and straight on to the mental matrix of the newborn baby.

For some time the baby lay, or was moved about. Things were done to the baby,

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something attached to its body was cut away, but the baby was oblivious to it all. Algernon had gone. Now there was a baby with no name. But after a few days in the hospital vague shapes came and moved in front of the infant's blurry vision. "Coo," said a somewhat crude voice, "runty little devil, ain' 'e? What you going to call 'im, Mary?"

The mother, fondly gazing down at her first born, looked away and smiled up at the visitor and said, "Well, Alan I think we are going to call him. We decided if it was a girl we'd call her Alice, and if it was a boy we'd call him Alan, so Alan it's going to be."

After a few more days Martin called for his wife at the hospital and together they left carrying the small bundle which was starting out a fresh life upon the Earth, a life which none of them knew at that time was destined to end thirty years on. The baby boy was taken away to a home in what was a fairly presentable part of Wapping, well within sound of the hooting of the tugs on the Thames where the great ships in the Pool of London came and hooted their welcome at getting back into a port, or screamed farewell with their sirens as they left the Port of London to go out again on a journey perhaps to the other side of the world.

And in that little house, not too far from Wapping Steps, a baby boy slept in a room above the shop where later he was going to wash potatoes, toss out bad fruit, and cut away rotten leaves from cabbages. But now the baby boy had to rest, had to grow a little and learn a different life style.

Time went on as time will — it has never been known to stop! — and the little boy was now four years of age. On this warm Sunday afternoon he was sitting on Grandpa Bond's knee when suddenly Grandpa leaned down towards him and said, "Well, what are you going to be when you grow up, boy?"

The boy mumbled to himself and carefully examined his fingers, and then he said in a childish treble, "Doctuh, doctuh." Having said that he slithered off his Grandfather's knee and ran shyly away.

"Well granfer," said Mary Bond, "it's a funny thing, you know, and I don't understand it at all, but he seems dead keen on anything to do with medicine and 'im just four years of age. When the doctor comes he won't let go the doctor's — you know, thing around the neck, that tube thing."

"Stethoscope," said grandpa.

"Well, yes, That's what I said — stethoscope," quoth Mary Bond. "Can't understand what it is. He seems to have got a real obsession about it and how can he think of being a doctor with us in our position?"

Time still went on. Alan Bond was now ten years of age, and for a boy of ten years of age he was studying quite hard at school. As a teacher said, "I don't understand about Alan, Mrs. Bond, he really does study and it's absolutely abnormal, it's not natural for a boy to study like this. All the time he is wanting to talk about doctoring and things like that. It's a tragedy really because — no offence intended, Mrs. Bond — but how can he expect to be a doctor?"

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Mary Bond thought about it all the time. She thought about it in the long stillnesses of the night when only the roar of traffic — to which she was immune — and the hooting of craft upon the Thames — to which she was accustomed —broke the night stillness. She thought long and hard and then, at last, in conversation with a neighbor she had an idea come to her. The neighbor said, "Well, you know Mary, There's a scheme out nowadays that if you get 'em young enough you can get a child insured. You pay so many pence every week, every week for sure you've got to pay, and then at a certain age, you decide that with your insurance man, at that certain age a boy can get a big sum of money which will put him through medical school. I know there's such a scheme, I know of a boy who's done it already, he's a lawyer. I'll get Bob Miller to come along and see you, he'll talk to you about it, he knows all there is to know about these insurance schemes." The neighbor rushed away full of good intentions, full of planning another person's future for him.

The years went on, and at last Alan Bond entered a grammar school. The Headmaster interviewed him on the first day at school, "Well, my boy, and what do you propose to be in your life when you leave school?"

"I am going to be a doctor, sir," said Alan Bond confidently looking straight at the Headmaster.

"Oh well, my boy, there's no harm in having these high aspirations, but you will have to study very hard to be a doctor and you will have to get many scholarships because your parents definitely cannot afford to pay your way through medical school and provide all the extra expenses which are incurred. I suggest, my boy, that you try to have something as a second string, as it were, to your ambitions."

"Damn you, boy!" said Martin Bond, "Can't you put down that blasted book for a minute? Haven't I told you to scrub those potatoes? Mrs. Potter will take her custom elsewhere if we let her have potatoes with great gobs of soil on them. Put your book down, I say, put it down, and get busy with them there spuds. I want 'em spotless and when they're spotless you go and deliver them to Mrs. Potter up in the High."

The father moved away in exasperation muttering to himself, "Damn it all, why do kids have ideas all the way beyond their station nowadays? That's all he thinks of, thinks of nothing else but being a doctor. How the devil's 'e think I'm going to get the money to pay for 'im being a doctor? Still, though" he thought to himself, " 'e's a real whizz at school they say, and when it comes to brains he was in the first line when they were handing 'em out. Yes, 'e's working hard at school studies, really trying to get a scholarship. Guess I've been a bit hard on 'im. 'E can't study properly when 'e's got a book propped up in front of 'im and I make 'im scrub the spuds. I'll go and give 'im a hand."

Father Bond went back to where his son was sitting on a three legged stool in front of a bath. In his left hand the boy had a book, with his right hand he was groping wildly to find a potato and then he would just drop it in the bath of water and swish it around a bit and then flip it out on to some folded newspapers.

"I'll give you a hand for a bit, boy, then we'll get these things done up and you can go off and do your studying again. I've no wish to be hard on you, boy, but I've got a

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living to get. There's you to keep, There's your mother to keep, and There's me as well. And we've got to pay our rent, we've got to pay our taxes, we've got all manner of things to pay and the Government don't care a damn about us. Come on, Let's get 'em cleaned up."

It was the end of the school term. The Headmaster and the teachers stood upon a dais. There were members of the School Board there, too, and in the Great Hall children sat done up in their very best Sunday clothes, scrubbed, uncomfortable, and embarrassed. Beside them fidgeting in the unaccustomed surroundings sat parents and relatives. Here and there a thirsty man would sneak longing eyes out of the window and across at a nearby pub, but this was Prize Day, Speech Day, and all the rest of it and they had to stay here.

One man thought to himself, "Well, bejabbers, I've only got to come here once a year, the brats, they've got to come here every day!"

The Headmaster rose to his feet and carefully adjusted the glasses upon the bridge of his nose. He cleared his throat and gazed blindly at the congregation before him. "I have much pleasure," he intoned in a most scholastic voice, "in telling you that Alan Bond has made quite phenomenal progress during this last school year. He has proved to be an absolute credit to our tutorial methods, and it gives me much pleasure to announce that he has been awarded a scholarship to the premedical school of St. Maggots." He stopped, waiting for the wild applause to die down, and then raising his hand for silence he said again, "He has been awarded this scholarship which is the first to be so awarded to any boy in this parish. I am sure that all of us wish him the very best of success in his career for, in the four years he has been at this school, he has consistently and persistently asserted that he was going to be a Doctor of Medicine. Now he has his chance."

He fumbled at the papers on the lectern before him, and a whole bunch of papers fell off and the sheets became airborne and went fluttering over the dais. Teachers hurriedly bent down and retrieved the falling sheets, carefully sorting them and placing them again on the lectern.

The Headmaster riffled through some papers and then seized upon one. "Alan Bond," he said, "will you come to me to receive this Diploma and the Award of the Scholarship which has just been confirmed."

"Ay, ah dunno!" said Father Bond when they got home and Alan was showing them the recommendation. "It seems to me, Alan me boy, that you're getting ideas far above your station in life. We are just greengrocers, we don't have no doctors nor lawyers in the family. Dunno why you get these wild ideas."

"But father," cried a despairing Alan, "I've been talking about becoming a doctor for as long as I could speak, and now all my school life I've worked, I've slaved, and I've denied myself all pleasures to study and to win scholarships. And now I've got a scholarship and you are raising objections again."

Mary bond, Alan's mother, sat silent. Only the way her hands could not keep still betrayed the difficulty she was having. Father and mother looked at each other and then

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the father said, "Look, Alan, we are not trying to keep you back, boy, we are not trying to harm your chances, but 'ere you got a bit of paper, well what's that paper mean? It just means that you can go to a certain school and your schooling will be free, but how about all the other stuff, how about all the books, all the instruments, and all the rest of it?" He looked helplessly at his son and then went on, "Oh sure, you can still live with us, boy, you won't have to pay us board, you can work a bit when you come back from school and eke things out that way. But we just don't have the money to pay for a lot of expensive things. We're living hand to mouth now, barely making a do of it, so think it over, boy, think it over. I think and your mother thinks it'd be a wonderful thing if you could be a doctor, but it would be an awful thing to be a poor doctor because you haven't got enough money to keep going."

Mary Bond said, "Alan, you know what happens to failed doctors, don't you? You know what happens to doctors who are struck off, don't you?"

Alan looked at her sourly and said, "I only know what rumors I have been told to try to discourage me. I have been told that if a medical student fails or if a doctor is crossed off he just becomes a hack traveler for some scruffy pharmaceutical firm. Well, what of it?" he queried. "I haven't failed yet, I haven't even started, and if I do fail I still have to earn a living and if I can earn a living as a medical salesman then it will be a darn sight better living than slinging potatoes in a bag and weighing them up, or counting pineapples, or muck like that!"

"Stop it, Alan, stop it," said his mother. "You are making fun of your Father's trade, and it's your father who is keeping you now, remember, you show no respect at all, you are getting way above yourself. Why not come down to earth?"

Then she said after a long pregnant silence, "Alan, Alan, why not take that job Uncle Bert offered you in the insurance office. It's a real steady job, and if you work hard at it you might even be able to work your way up to be a claims adjuster. Think about it, Alan, will you?"

The boy morosely left the room. His parents silently looked at each other and then there was the sound of his footsteps going down the wooden stairs beside the shop. There came the slamming of the street door and the sound of his feet on the sidewalk outside. "Dunno what got hold of that boy," said Martin Bond. "I don't know how we came to produce such a fellow. Ever since 'e could talk 'e's been on and on endlessly, monotonously about becoming a doctor. Why the hell can't he settle down like other boys and do some decent job? That's what I want to know, why the hell can't he do it, eh?"

His wife silently went on with her task of darning the already much-darned socks, and there were tears in her eyes as at last she looked up and said, "Oh, I don't know Martin, I sometimes think we're too hard on him. It's right, after all, to have an ambition and there's nothing so dreadful about being a doctor, is there?" Martin snorted and replied heatedly "Well, I dunno about that, the good earth and the produce thereof is good enough for me. Never did 'old with these boys muckin' about with a woman's innards. Don't seem right to me. I'm going down to the shop." With that he angrily jumped to his feet and stamped down the back stairs.

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Mary Bond threw down her darning and sat still gazing out of the window. Then at last she got up and went into the bedroom and got down on her knees by the side of the bed, praying for guidance and for strength. After many minutes she rose to her feet again sniffing and saying to herself, "Funny thing, all the parsons say about praying when one is in trouble, and I do just that but I've never in my life had a prayer answered. Guess it's all superstition, That's what I think." Sniffing she left her bedroom, and then wiping her eyes upon her apron she started preparing the supper.

Alan walked gloomily along the sidewalk. Idly he kicked a can which was in his way. By chance — or was it chance? — he kicked a bit hard and the can flew up at an angle and made a tinny clank as it hit a metal plate. Alan looked guiltily around and prepared to run for it, and then he looked at the metal plate. "R. Thompson, M.D." he read. He went to the metal plate, the brass plate with the incised black wax-filled letters, and rubbed it caressingly with his hands. For some time he just stood there, bowed in thought over the plate let into the wall.

"What's the matter, old man?" asked a kindly voice, and a warm hand fell lightly to his shoulder. Alan jumped off the ground in fright and spun around to look up to the smiling face of a big doctor.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Dr. Thompson, I wasn't meaning to do anything wrong," said the boy in some confusion.

The doctor laughed at him and said, "Well, well, what a face of misery. Have you taken on all the cares of the world, or what?"

"Just about, I guess," replied Alan in a tone of deep despondency.

The doctor glanced quickly at his watch and then put an arm around the boy's shoulder. "Come on, lad, come inside, Let's talk about it, what have you done? Got a girl in trouble, or something? Is her father after you? Come inside, let's see what we can do about it." The doctor gently led the hesitant boy through the gate, up the little path and into the surgery.

"Mrs. Simmonds," he called going to the door, "how about rustling up some char for us and have you got any of those sweet biscuits or has that lazy husband of yours scoffed the lot?" From somewhere in the depths of the house a muffled voice answered. The doctor went back into his surgery and said, "Okay, boy, get yourself composed, we'll have a cup of tea together and then we'll see what there is to be done."

Mrs. Simmonds soon appeared with a tray on which were two cups, a jug of milk, a basin of sugar and the very best silver teapot plus, of course, the inevitable silver jug of hot, hot water. She had thought long on the question of should she produce the best silver teapot or an ordinary china one, but then she thought — well, the doctor obviously had someone of great importance there or he would not have called down like that, it wasn't surgery time or anything, not yet, she didn't even know what the doctor was doing at home at such a time. So — the best china and the best teapot, and the best smile on her face as she entered the room. But then her jaw dropped, she thought there would be a lord at least there, or perhaps a lady, or perhaps one of the big businessmen at the Pool

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of London, but what she saw was a remarkably despondent looking, underfed school-boy.

Well, she thought, he was a schoolboy in spite of the fact that he was getting on to be an old schoolboy, but she thought firmly it wasn't her business, so carefully she put down the tray in front of the doctor, bowed a little in her confusion, and went out shutting the door behind her.

The doctor poured out some tea saying, "How do you like it, lad, milk first? Or do you like it like me, anything so long as it's wet and warm and fairly sweet?"

Alan nodded dumbly. He did not know what to do, he did not know what to say, he was so engulfed in misery, so overcome with the thought that had he failed again? Then he caught himself — again? — now what did he mean by that? He did not know. There was something pressing at the back of his mind, something he ought to know, or was it something he ought not to know? Bemused he rubbed his head between his hands.

"What is it lad? You *are* in a state, aren't you? Now just drink this tea and nibble a few of these sweet biscuits and tell me what it's all about. There's plenty of time, I'm supposed to be having a half day off, so Let's make it a project to see what's wrong with you and what we can do for you."

Poor Alan was not much accustomed to kindness nor to consideration. He had always been considered as the odd one in the family, the odd one in the district, referred to as "that young son of a greengrocer who's got such grand ideas". Now the words of the kindly doctor "got through" to him and he burst into bitter tears. Sobs wracked his frame.

The doctor looked at him with great concern, and said, "All right, boy, all right, have out your tears, There's nothing wrong in that. Get it out of your system, go on, weep all you want to, There's nothing wrong with it. Do you know, even old Winny Churchill sheds tears, and if he can you can, eh?"

Shamefacedly Alan mopped his face with his handkerchief. The doctor was impressed to notice how clean the handkerchief was and, as the boy held the handkerchief to his eyes Dr. Thompson also noticed that his hands were clean, his nails were trimmed and there was no dirt in the nails either. The boy went up several points in the doctor's estimation. "Here, lad — drink this," said the doctor as he put a cup of tea in front of Alan. "Stir it up well, There's a great dollop of sugar in it. The sugar will give you energy, you know. Come on get with it."

Alan drank the tea and nervously nibbled a sweet biscuit. Then the doctor filled up the cups again and moved beside the boy saying, "If you feel like it, lad, get the load off your mind, it must be something dreadful, and a load shared is a load halved, you know."

Alan sniffed and wiped away errant tears again, and then everything tumbled out of him. How since the very first thing he had known he had the strongest of strong impressions that he had come to be a doctor, how almost the first words he had been able to string together in a sentence had been, "I be doctor." He told Dr. Thompson how all the

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time he had put aside boyish things, he had studied and studied. How instead of reading adventure stories and science fiction and all that he had got technical books from the library to the consternation of the woman librarian who thought it was most unhealthy for a young boy to want to know so much of anatomy.

"But I couldn't help it, doctor, really I couldn't." said Alan in dismay. "It was something beyond me, something driving me on. I don't know what it is. I know that all the time I get the urge, an impossible urge, that I've got to be a doctor, no matter what, and tonight my parents have been at me, telling me I've got above myself, that I'm no good." He lapsed into silence again. The doctor put a hand on the boy's shoulder, and softly said, "And what started the outburst tonight, lad?"

Alan squirmed in his seat and said, "Doctor, you'll never believe it but I'm top boy of the class, top boy of the grammar school. This has been the end of term and the Headmaster, Mr. Hale, has told me that I have been recommended for a special scholarship at St. Maggots pre-med school and my parents – well," then he nearly broke down again and twisted his handkerchief into knots between his fingers.

"Eh, lad, it was ever thus." said the doctor. "Parents always think that they can control the destiny of those whom they produce, sometimes as the result of an accident too. But never mind, lad, Let's see what we can find out — you said you were at grammar school? You said the Headmaster, Mr. Hale — well, I know Mr. Hale very well indeed, he's one of my patients. Okay, Let's see what he can tell us."

The doctor looked up his index and soon found the name of the Headmaster and the telephone number, and then quickly he made a phone call. "Good evening Hale," said Dr. Thompson, "Thompson here. I've got a young lad in front of me, he seems a very bright young lad and he tells me that you have recommended him for a special scholarship — good heavens!" said the doctor in some amazement, "Hale, I've forgotten to ask the boy's name!"

At the other end of the line the Headmaster chuckled and said, "Oh yes, I know him, Alan Bond, a very bright lad indeed, exceptionally bright. He's worked like a slave throughout his four years here, and I thought he was going to be a failure when he joined in the first case but I was never more wrong. Yes, it's quite true, he is the top boy in the school, the highest marks we have ever had, and the most progress this school has seen, but—" and the Headmaster's voice faded for a moment, and then he continued, "I am sorry for the boy. His parents, his parents you know, they are the trouble. They've got that little greengrocer's shop down the street, they are making hard going of it, they are strapped for money and I can't see how that boy is going to manage. I wish I could do something to help him. I've helped him to get a scholarship but he needs more than that."

"Well, thanks a lot, Hale, I appreciate your remarks," said Dr. Thompson putting down the phone and turning to Alan. "Boy," he said, "I had much the same sort of trouble as you have had, I had to fight every bloomin' inch of the way, scratch with tooth and nail to make a do of it. Okay, tell you what we'll do, Let's go along now and see your parents. I told you it's my half day off and what better way to spend What's left of it than helping some other poor devil who also is having a bad time. Come on lad, stir your stumps." The

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doctor rose to his feet and Alan got up as well. At the door Dr. Thompson gave two rings and then said, "Oh, Mrs. Simmonds, I shall be out for a time, just take any messages, will you?"

Down the road they strode, the big tall doctor and the undernourished boy who was making a late approach to manhood. Down the street they went and as they approached the shop they saw the light was on. Through the window they could see Father Bond weighing out bags of produce. The doctor strode to the door, rapped sharply, and put his hands beside his face so he could peer in free of reflections.

Martin Bond looked up sourly and then shook his head in negation. He mouthed the word "Closed," but then he saw his son there and he thought to himself, "Oh my God, What's the boy done now? What trouble has he brought us now?" And then he hurried to the door and drew back the bolt. The doctor and Alan moved inside, and Martin Bond hastened to slide the bolt shut again.

"Good evening, so you're Martin Bond, eh?" said Dr. Thompson. "Well, I'm Dr. Thompson and I live down the street, you know, I've got my practice there. I've been talking to your boy and he's a bright young lad, too. I think he deserves a chance."

"All right for you to talk, doctor," said Martin Bond truculently. "You don't have to scabble for money in a place like this, you're set up pretty good I reckon. You get enough from your fees and from the Friendly Societies to keep you living high off the hog, I've got to dig in the ground. But anyway, What's the boy done now?" he asked.

The doctor turned to Alan and said, "You told me you got this special diploma, you told me you got a special letter from Mr. Hale, the Headmaster, will you slip upstairs and get them and bring them down for me?"

Alan darted away and could be heard running up the wooden stairs. Dr. Thompson turned to the father and said, "Bond, you've got a bright boy there, he might even be a genius. I've been talking to his Headmaster."

Martin Bond turned on him in a fury, "And what's it got to do with you? How do *you* come into it? You leading the boy into trouble, or something?" he asked. For a moment the doctor's face clouded with wrath and then controlling himself with an effort he said, "Every so often, Bond, somebody comes to this Earth perhaps with some carry-over from a previous life, I don't know what it is, but people have strong impulses, very strong impressions — well, they don't get it for nothing. Your son seems to be one of those. His Headmaster was very emphatic that the boy was bright and that he was born to be a doctor. If you think I'm leading him astray, well, you think again. I'm trying to help him."

Alan dashed into the shop again, just about breathless with the speed of running. Meekly he held out to the doctor the diploma and the copy of the letter from the Headmaster together with the acceptance of the Headmaster's recommendation from the Dean of the pre-med school of St. Maggots. Without a word the doctor took the papers and read them from start to finish. There wasn't a sound except the rustling of papers as he turned over a page and put the read page on the bottom. Then, finished, he said, "Well, this convinces me, I think you ought to have your chance, Alan. We'll see what we can do."

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He stood for a few moments wondering what was the best course to take, and then he turned to the father and said, "Why can't you, your wife and I have a talk about this? The boy is brilliant, the boy definitely has a mission. Can I talk to you somewhere?"

Martin turned sourly to Alan and said, "Well, you started all this, you brought all the trouble here, get on with that weighing up and I'll have the doctor talk to your mother and me." So saying he led the way out of the shop and up the stairs, being very careful to close the stair door after him and calling up, "Mother! I'm bringing Dr. Thompson up, he wants to talk to us about Alan."

Upstairs Mary Bond hastened to the top of the staircase muttering to herself. "Oh, heavens, oh my God, what *has* that boy done now?"

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mary Bond felt all fluttery inside as if a whole load of butterflies had got into her somehow. She looked with apprehension from the doctor to her husband and then to Alan who had crept up the stairs behind them. Helplessly she showed the doctor into their sitting room where only favored visitors ever went. Father Bond said, "Okay, Alan, off to your room."

The doctor instantly interrupted saying, "Oh, but Mr. Bond, Alan is the most interested person in this arrangement. I definitely think that he should be here in this discussion. After all, he's not a child now, he's approaching an age when many others would be at college and we hope that he's going too!" Reluctantly Martin Bond nodded his head in acquiescence and the four of them sat down, the mother with her hands folded demurely in her lap.

"Dr. Thompson seems to think our boy has got a lot of goods up in his attic," said Martin Bond, "he wants to talk to us about him because he thinks Alan should become a doctor. I dunno what to say about it."

The mother sat still and said nothing, and then Dr. Thompson spoke, "You know, Mrs. Bond," he said, "there are some very strange things in life and people get impressions that they have to do a thing without knowing why. Alan here, for instance," he gestured in the boy's direction, "has a very very strong impression that he has to enter medicine. The impression is so strong that it is almost an obsession, and when we get a boy, or a girl either, for that matter, who insists on a special career almost from the first words they can utter then we have to be convinced that the Good Lord maybe is getting a message through or is trying to work a miracle or something. I don't profess to understand it, all I know is this," he looked around at them to see if they were following him, and then continued, "I was an orphan, I was brought up in an orphanage and, to put it in its mildest form, I had a very hard life in the orphanage because the people there thought that I was different in some ways because I, too, had a definite vocation, and that was that I should enter medicine. Well, I did enter medicine and now I'm doing quite well at it."

The parents sat still, their brains almost obviously clunking over as they tossed

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thoughts around inside their skulls.

At last Martin Bond said, "Yes, doctor, yes I agree with everything you say, the boy should have his chance in life, I had none neither and I'm having to fight to pay bills. But, tell me doctor," he looked really hard at Dr. Thompson and continued, "we are poor people, we have a hard job to pay our bills every month and if we don't pay our bills every month then we don't get our supplies, and if we don't get our supplies then, by golly, we're out of business. So tell us, how are we going to provide for Alan? We can't afford it and that's all there is to it." Martin Bond slapped his knee vigorously to emphasize that here was "finis", "the end", and all the rest of it. Alan sat there downcast, looking glummer and glummer.

"If I was in the U.S.A.," he thought, "I'd be able to take a part time job and study the other part time and I'd get through that way, but this country — well, there doesn't seem much hope for poor lads like me."

Dr. Reginald Thompson was thinking. He put his hands in his trouser pockets and stretched out his legs, and then he said, "Well; as I told you, I've had a hard life and I've done what I believe I had to do. Now, it may be that I've got to help Alan, and so I'll make this offer to you." He looked around to see if they were paying attention, and indeed they were; Alan was looking straight at him, Father Bond was looking less dour, and Mother Bond had stopped fiddling with her fingers. Satisfied with what he saw the doctor continued, "I am a bachelor, never had any time for the women, you know, been too interested in study, research, and all the rest of it, so I stayed a bachelor and I saved a lot of money by doing so. I am prepared to invest some of that money in Alan if he can convince me that he really will make a good doctor."

Mary Bond said, "That would be a wonderful thing, doctor. We tried to take out an insurance policy which would help Alan pay expenses but there was no such policy suitable to people of our means, or rather, lack of means."

The doctor nodded silently, and said, "Well, he's all right in the educational line because the Headmaster of his school spoke very highly indeed about him, and he has a free scholarship to enter St. Maggots pre-med school — just the same as I had, but that doesn't pay his living expenses, and it would be better for him to live in college, and it doesn't pay for various other expenses. So this is what I'll do."

He sat there sucking in his cheeks and blowing them out, then he turned to Alan and said, "This is what I'll do, Alan. I'll take you to the Hunterian Museum up at the Royal College of Surgeons and we'll spend a day going through the Museum and if you can stick it out without fainting or anything then we can be sure that you will make a success as a doctor." He was silent for a few moments and then continued, "I can take a step more than that. I can take you to a dissecting room where they have bodies and bits of bodies all over the place. If you go and be sick all over them then you're out of the doctor line. If you can convince me, okay, we'll have a partnership — you've got your scholarship, I'll pay all the expenses. And when you are a qualified doctor able to pay back then you do the same for some other unlucky soul who is trapped between what he knows he has to do and his inability to do it through lack of money."

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Alan nearly fainted with relief and happiness, but then Father Bond said slowly, "Well now, doctor, we rely on the boy to do our deliveries for us, you know. We've kept him all this time, it's only right he should do something for us and if, as you say, he's going to be stuck away somewhere in some college living in luxury then what about his poor parents? Do you think I'm going out after hours and deliver?"

Mrs. Bond looked shocked and said, "But Martin! Martin! Surely you remember that we managed before Alan came on the scene?"

"Yes, of course I know," said Martin angrily, "I'm not likely to forget, but I'm also remembering all the boy's been to us all these years. We've 'ad to provide for him, and now when 'e's 'ad all 'e can get from us 'e's going to rush off and be a doctor if you please, and I suppose that's the last we shall ever see of him. Bah!"

Martin Bond's hands were working together as if he was longing to strangle somebody and then he burst out, "And what do *you* get out of it Dr. Reginald Thompson? Why have you suddenly taken such an interest in the boy? That's what I want to know. People just don't do things for others, you know, unless they've got some motive behind it. What are you getting out of it?"

Dr. Thompson laughed out loud and then said, "My goodness me, Mr. Bond, you've convinced me that your son is quite exceptional. All you think about is what you can get out of things, and all he thinks about is how he can help others by being a doctor. You want to know what I'm getting out of it, Mr. Bond? Well, I'll tell you; I have impressions just the same as your son has impressions. I have the strongest impression that I've got to help him. Don't ask me why, I don't know why, and if you think that I am after him sexwise well, then, Mr. Bond you are a bigger fool than I thought you were. I can get plenty of boys, and girls too, if I want them, but this time I want to help Alan for the sake of something that I know, something at the back of my mind and won't come forward. But if you don't want to have him helped, Mr. Bond, then we will wait until he is twenty-one and, although it will be a bit late, well, we'll take it from there. Now, I'm not here to argue with you. If you don't want to go on with this, say so and I'll get out." Dr. Thompson got to his feet looking a very truculent individual indeed. His face was red and he looked as if he would like to throw Martin Bond through his own front window.

Martin Bond twisted his hands about and fiddled with the end of his jacket, and then he said, "Well, maybe I was a bit hasty in what I said, but I'm wondering how we can manage to get the spuds taken out at night and things like that. We've got to live, you know, as well as the boy."

Mary Bond broke in very hurriedly: "Shush, Martin, shush, we can arrange that all right. We can soon get a schoolboy come along and do it for us. It won't cost much, it won't cost as much as keeping Alan here." Martin Bond slowly nodded his head. "All right, all right," he said with some reluctance. "You can go. You're not twenty-one yet and I still have control of you, and you make a success of that doctoring job you're going to do or you'll hear from me about it."

With that the father turned abruptly and clattered down the stairs to the shop.

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Mary Bond turned apologetically to Dr. Thompson and said, "I am so sorry about this, doctor. My husband sometimes is a bit impetuous. He is Aries, you know!"

So it was arranged. Dr. Thompson would take Alan to the Hunterian Museum on his day off next week. With that arranged the doctor went home and Alan returned to his room to study.

"Hello there, Alan," said Dr. Thompson as Alan presented himself at the surgery a week later. "Come on in, we'll have a cup of tea and then we'll get in the car and we'll go off to Lincoln's Inn Fields." They had their tea and some biscuits, and then the doctor said, "You'd better go in there, boy, all the excitement might stir you up and I don't want you taking a leak in my nice clean car!" Alan blushed and hurried off to the littlest room where, we are told, even a king must go on foot!

Dr. Thompson led the way out around a path going along the back of the house. There he had his car parked, a good old Morris Oxford. Unlocking the doors he said, "Get in," and Alan thankfully got in the passenger seat. Alan was not very used to private cars, all his traveling had been done on clattering trams or rattling buses. He watched with avidity as the doctor started the engine, waited a few moments for it to warm up and then checked the charge rate and oil pressure, and drove out. "Do you know the best way to go Alan?" asked the doctor quizzically.

"Well sir," replied Alan, "I've looked it up on a map and all I can say is you go along the East India Dock Road and then go over London Bridge, and I suppose." he said rather tremulously, "we have to go over Waterloo Bridge as well."

"Nope," said the doctor, "I've got you this time, we're not going across any bridges, you follow the route carefully because if my plans come right you'll be doing this journey quite a few times."

Alan was quite enthralled looking at all the places outside his own locale of Tower Hamlets. He had not been able to move about much, and yet he had a most uneasy feeling that many of these districts through which they were driving had been well known to him at some time. At last they turned right and went up Kingsway in Holborn, up Kingsway for quite a distance, and then they turned into Sardinia Street which led to Lincoln's Inn Fields. Dr. Thompson suddenly drove through some iron gates to the right and parked his car smartly. Switching off the engine and taking out the key he said, "Here we are, lad, out you get."

Together they walked into the entrance of the Royal College of Surgeons' building and Dr. Thompson nodded with easy familiarity to one of the uniformed people standing inside. "Okay Bob?" he asked one of them, and then nodding cheerfully he went on into a dark entrance lobby. "Come on, we turn left here — oh, wait a minute, I forgot, I've got to show you this." He stopped and grabbed Alan's arm saying,

"Now, here's something which will make your teeth ache. Here are some early dental instruments. D'you see them there in that glass case? Now how would you like to have your molars yanked out with things like that?" He slapped Alan playfully on the back and said, "Come on, Let's get in here."

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"Here" was a large space, quite a large space, littered with cabinets and closets and, of course, shelf after shelf of glass bottles. Alan looked about in awe at the bottled babies, floating fetuses, and all the extremely peculiar organs which surgeons had thought it advisable to save for the purposes of examination and student tuition.

They walked down one room and stopped at a well-polished walnut case. Dr. Thompson pulled out a drawer and Alan could see that it was two sheets of glass sandwiched together, and inside between the two sheets was an awful mess of "something". Dr. Thompson laughed and said, "This cabinet represents a brain, a brain which has been sliced up so that you can open a drawer and look down and you can see any particular part of the brain. Look at this—" he reached for another drawer and pulled the handle and out came another glass sandwich, and the doctor pointed at it saying, "That is supposed to be where you get psychic impressions. I wonder what's going on in yours?" Then he added, "I wonder what's going on in mine too!"

The doctor and Alan spent all the morning in the Hunterian Museum and then Dr. Thompson said, "Well, I guess it's time we had something to eat, don't you?" Alan had been feeling rumbling pains and he nodded as he thoroughly agreed. So they left the Museum and got in the car and drove off to a club where Dr. Thompson was obviously well known. Soon they were sitting at a table having lunch.

"After this we'll go along to a hospital and I'll take you into a dissecting room and we'll see what we can see there."

"Oh, can one just walk into a dissecting room like that?" asked Alan in some astonishment.

Dr. Thompson laughed and said, "Oh dear me, no, of course not but I am known as a specialist and I had a place in Harley Street for some time but I just couldn't stand all the bowing and scraping there, I couldn't stand a lot of the old matrons who thought that if they paid enough money they would be cured immediately. And anyway, they treat doctors as the lowest form of life," he said as he finished his meal.

Soon the car drove up to a hospital entrance and parked in the space reserved for doctors only. Dr. Thompson and Alan got out and walked into the main entrance to a reception desk. Dr. Thompson went forward and said to one of the staff there, "I want to speak to Professor Dromdary-Dumbkoff," he said. The attendant turned away and spoke into a telephone returning to Dr. Thompson and saying, "Yes, sir, the professor has asked me to bring you and your visitor to him. Will you come this way, please?" Together they walked through hospital corridors for what to Alan seemed to be endless miles. At last they reached an office with the professor's name on the outside. The attendant knocked and pushed the door open. Dr. Thompson and Alan entered. The first thing they saw was half a human on a table and two people in white coats were busily cutting down into it. For a moment Alan felt strange things happening inside him, but then he thought quickly that if he were to be a doctor he would have to become used to sights like this, so he swallowed quickly, closed and opened his eyes two or three times, and then everything was all right.

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"This is the boy I told you about, Prof, he's good stuff, you know," said Dr. Thompson introducing Alan. The professor gazed hard at him and said, "Ach, right it is that you may be already, we shall see what we shall see, eh?" and then he broke into such a girl-ish chuckle that poor Alan felt highly embarrassed.

For some time they just stood there chatting while the professor watched the two students at work, and then Alan was taken down to a dissecting room, a huge room remarkably cold and frightfully smelly. For a moment poor Alan thought that he was going to disgrace himself by either fainting or vomiting on the floor, but again he remembered that he had a job to do and the spasm of nausea quickly passed. The professor moved from body to body - it was not lecture time so no students were here — pointing out various things of interest, and Dr. Thompson was closely observing Alan's reactions.

"Ach, de dunderheaded fool!" exclaimed the professor angrily as he stooped down and picked up a severed arm which had dropped off a table and rolled beneath it. "Students nowadays, they are not as they were in Germany, they are so careless. How would they like to have an arm dropped?" Mumbling to himself and grumbling away he moved to another body and reaching out a hand caught Alan by the arm and said, "Take that scalpel and make an incision from here to here, you should know what cutting flesh is like." Alan numbly took the proffered scalpel and then with an inward shudder which he hoped was not too obvious he pressed the point of the knife on to the dead flesh and pulled it down. "You have the touch, you have the touch," said the professor excitedly. "Yes, you will be all right as a medical student."

Later Dr. Thompson and Alan had tea, and the doctor said, "Well now, so you can still eat in spite of all you've seen. I half expected to see you rolling under the table green in the face or something. What are you going to do when you get kidney on toast next time? Throw it up?" Alan laughed. He was very much more at ease now, and he said, "No sir, I feel quite at home."

Slowly they drove back to Wapping through the evening crowds, Dr. Thompson talking all the time saying what he wanted to do, how he was getting old and he was tired, saying how he would look after Alan and provide him with his own bank account so that he would be independent of his parents. He said, "I never knew my parents, I was an orphan, but if my parents had gone on like your parents did— well, believe me, I think I should have run for it!"

That evening there was great talk in the Bond household. Father Bond was trying not to show his interest but at the same time he was listening with avidity to everything being said, and then at the end he said gruffly, "Well, you can go when you like, lad, we've found a boy to take over when you leave us."

And so, speedily, it was all arranged. Alan was to go to the pre-med school of St. Maggots Hospital, and after that if he was successful he would become a medical student at St. Maggots. And Alan was successful at pre-med school, he did well, he was of the first three and became a well-favored student beloved of his tutors. And then the time came for him to leave pre-med and enter the hospital as a proper medical student. He did not really look forward to that which was to take place on the next day because change

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is ever strange and there had been many, many changes in Alan's life.

St. Maggots was an old hospital built mainly in the shape of a "U". One arm of the "U" was for medical cases, and what would be the bottom of the "U" was for psychiatric, paediatric and similar, while the other arm of the "U" was for surgical cases. Of course Alan during his pre-med studies had been into the hospital on many occasions but it was with a decided feeling of trepidation that he went there on that first Monday morning. He went up to the main entrance and said who he was, and the attendant sourly remarked, "Oh, one of them, eh?" Then he turned to a ledger and took his time fumbling through the pages, licking his thumb and leaving decided nicotine stains on the paper. Then at last he straightened up and said, "Ah yes, I know all about you. Go straight up them stairs, turn right, turn left, and it's the second door on the right. It's Dr. Eric Tetley that you have to see, and you'd better be careful, he's in a poor mood this morning."

With a shrug of his shoulders the attendant turned away. Alan paused for a moment in some astonishment, he thought there would be a bit more respect for a man who was going to serve in the hospital for three or four years as a medical student. But he, too, shrugged his shoulders, picked up his cases, and walked up the stairs.

At the top of the staircase in a little vestibule around to the right there was a table and a man was sitting at it. "Who are you?" he asked. Alan identified himself and the attendant checked through a book and then wrote something on a card, saying, "You can leave your cases here, just take this along to Dr. Eric Tetley's office, knock once — not too loud, mind! — and then enter. What happens next is up to you."

Alan thought this was a most peculiar system of dealing with new entrants, but he took the card from the man and went to the office as directed. He knocked, waited a discreet second or two, and then quietly entered. There was a desk littered with papers, surgical instruments, and photographs of women. A black nameplate lettered in white, "Dr. Eric Tetley", stood on the corner of the desk and the doctor himself sat square in an office swivel chair. He had his arms out wide, big fat hands spread on the edge of the desk.

Alan walked forward to the desk being somewhat unnerved by the unmoving stare of Dr. Tetley, then he said, "Sir, I have come to join St. Maggots. I have to give you this card."

The doctor made no move to take it, so Alan put it on the desk in front of him and stood back under that quite unnerving stare.

"Hrmph!" grunted the doctor. "Yes, old Thompson was right, I think you've got the makings of a good man in you, but you need straightening out a bit, eh?" Then he raised his voice, not in song, but to bawl, "Paul! Bond is here, come in will you?" Only then did Alan see that the doctor had his finger now pressed on a button and was using an office intercom system. Soon there was a flurry of noise and a small untidy looking doctor with hair all over the place bounced into the room. He had on a white coat which reached down to his ankles and his sleeves were so long that they had to be rolled and rolled again. He did look a rag-bag of a doctor.

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"Oh, so this is Bond, eh? What am I supposed to do with him— kiss him?" Dr. Eric Tetley snorted and said, "You get a go at him first, you've got to make a good man out of him."

Dr. Paul grunted as he leafed through Alan's papers and said, "Oh, so now St. Maggots has come down to this, eh? We've got the son of a spud seller who is going to be a specialist surgeon or practicing physician, or something. What do you make of that? No more old school ties, spud sellers, bah!"

Alan was shocked. He really was shocked down to the core of his being to think that this scruffy untidy looking wretch could say such unkind things, but he was there to learn, he thought, so he said nothing. But then he turned to look at Dr. Paul and saw the twinkle in the gray eyes. The doctor said, "But there it is, boy, they say that Jesus was the son of a carpenter, don't they? Don't place much faith in 'em myself, I'm a good follower of Moses." And with that he laughed and held out his hand.

Shortly after Alan was shown to a room right up in the center tower of the building, right over the main door. He had to share that with two other student doctors, and the conditions were cramped in the extreme. All they had to sleep upon was canvas camp beds.

The attendant who had shown him to the room and let him put his cases down on a bed said, "Okay doc, now I've got to take you to the Maristow Ward over in the medical wing, That's a thirty-five bed ward, by the way, with two beds in a private room attached. Sister Swaine is in charge, and boy oh boy, is she ever a bitch. Mind your p's and q's there!"

Sister Swaine in charge of the Maristow Ward did indeed appear to be a formidable dragon, about six foot tall, about two hundred pounds in weight, she scowled at everything and everybody. Her skin was so dark that she looked almost like a half-caste, but she came from a very old English family and it was astounding to Alan when she opened her mouth and spoke and the voice was that of one of the most cultured people he had met. But familiarity with Sister Swaine soon showed that she was no dragon, and when she saw that a student was working hard then indeed she went out of her way to help that student. For shirkers she had no time whatever, and really hastened to the Matron's office to report a student who fell down on the job.

A medical student's life in a hospital is always much of a muchness, much the same. Alan worked hard, he loved to work, and he made a very favorable impression. At the end of his third year he was called in by Dr. Eric Tetley. "You're doing well, my boy, better than I thought you would. I thought first, no matter what old Thompson said, you'd be back scrubbing spuds. You've got a good record all the way through, and now I want you to be my personal assistant in the coming year. Take it?" He looked up at Alan and, not waiting for a reply he said, "Okay, take a half day off and go and tell old Thompson from me that he was right, I owe him a case of—" he said.

Alan walked to the door and then was called back. "Hey —you — wait a minute!" Alan turned back wondering what was happening now, and then Dr. Tetley said, "Got a car?"

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"No sir," said Alan. "I'm just an ex-spud seller turned medical student. I can't afford a car."

"Hrmph!" grunted Dr. Eric Tetley. "Well, I suppose you can drive?"

"Oh yes, Dr. Thompson taught me, and I've got my licence."

"Well then," said Dr. Tetley, fiddling about in the right hand drawer of his desk, mumbling about and saying shocking words as he turned out all manner of papers, instruments, etc., at last pouncing with glee upon a ring with two keys attached. "Here it is, the key to my car. I want you to drop a parcel in to a lady — here's the address, can you read the writing? — well, okay, drop this in to her and don't stop and have any chit chat with her, mind, and then go straight on to old Thompson. Be sure you're back here by nine o'clock tonight. My car is in bay 23, That's just below the Matron's office. Oh!" he said, "I'd better give you a note saying that you can take the car otherwise some bally copper'll come along and pinch you for stealing it or something, I had it happen once before." He scribbled something on a piece of paper, put his official stamp on it, and then thrust it at Alan saying, "Now beat it, don't come around here until nine o'clock to-night."

The years went by, years of great success for Alan Bond, but years of trouble as well. His father died; he had an attack of rage one day and just dropped dead in the shop because a customer was complaining about the price of asparagus. So Alan had to provide for his mother because there was nothing left worth selling in the shop, and, of course, the property had been rented. So Alan put his mother in a couple of rooms and made sure that she was adequately looked after. Unfortunately his mother took a violent dislike to Alan, saying that he had killed his father by running out on him and trying to live in a station above himself, so, apart from providing for her, Alan never went to see her.

Soon there came talk of war. The awful Germans, as was the awful Germans wont, were sabre rattling again and boasting with all their bumptious brashness of what they were going to do to the rest of the world. There came the invasion of this country, and the invasion of that country, and Alan, now a fully trained doctor with M.D. after his name, tried to join up but he was deferred because of the good work he was doing in his locality and for shipping companies near the Pool of London.

One day Dr. Reginald Thompson phoned Alan at the hospital where he was now on the hospital staff and said, "Alan, come over and see me when you've got a few moments, will you? I want to see you urgently."

Alan, of course, looked upon Dr. Thompson with real love so he soon arranged with the ageing Dr. Tetley to go off for the rest of the day. Now he had his own car and soon he was back parking his car in Dr. Thompson's driveway.

"Alan," said Dr. Thompson, "I'm getting old, boy, I haven't much longer to live. Give me a checkup, will you?" Alan stood there in stupefaction, and then Dr. Thompson said again, "What's wrong with you, boy, forgotten you're a doctor or something? Get with it, will you." And he started taking off his clothes. Alan soon got hold of Dr. Thompson's

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instruments, ophthalmoscope, blood pressure apparatus and all the rest of it, and, of course, he always carried his own stethoscope. A check of Dr. Thompson revealed hypertension and acute mitral stenosis.

"You'd better look after yourself," said Alan, "You're not in such good shape as I thought. Why don't you come into St. Maggots and we'll see what can be done for you?"

"No, I'm not coming into that flea-ridden dump," said Dr. Reginald Thompson. "What I want to do is this; I've got a very successful practice here, it brings in a lot of money, so Tetley tells me that you work for him very well and have done for five years, and I say now is the time for you to take over my practice while I'm here to help you and to show you the ropes. You've been stuck in St. Maggots so long that you're getting round-shouldered and you're almost myopic.

"Snap out of it and come and live with me." Then he said, "Oh, of course, I shall be leaving this practice to you and until I kick the bucket you and I can work as equal partners. Okay? Shake on it."

Alan felt quite upset. He had been for some time definitely in a rut, he'd got an obsession, the obsession that he had to save life, save life at all costs no matter how sick, no matter how incurable the patient. Alan was not much good as a surgeon, he had no interest in that, but ordinary medicine, that was his forte and he was on the way to making a big name for himself. And now his friend and benefactor, Dr. Reginald Thompson, wanted him to enter private practice.

The doctor broke in on his thoughts saying, "Go back to St. Maggots, talk about it to Eric Tetley and ask your friend Dr. Wardley what he thinks about it. You can rest assured that that pair will give you honest advice. Now get out of my sight until you've made up your mind, you're looking almost seasick there."

Just then Mrs. Simmonds, now quite elderly, came in with the tea on a wooden trolley saying, "Ah, Dr. Thompson, I saw that Dr. Bond was here so I thought I'd save you the trouble of shouting down for the tea, here it is," and she smiled broadly at Alan who was now very much her favorite for the good job he was making of his life.

Back at St. Maggots Alan was able to discuss things with Drs. Tetley and Wardley. Dr. Wardley said, "Well, I shouldn't be telling you this, Alan, but Reginald Thompson has been a patient of mine for years, he's been having series of cardiograms and he could go out like a light. You owe everything to him, you know, and you'd better think seriously if you shouldn't go to him."

Dr. Tetley nodded his head in agreement and said, "Yes, Alan, you've done a good job here at St. Maggots but you're too limited, you're becoming too institutionalized. We're going to have a war and it needs somebody to get out there in the streets, we can always call you back in emergency. I'll release you from your contract."

So it came to pass that a month later Dr. Alan Bond became an equal partner with Dr. Reginald Thompson, and they made a very successful practice. But all the time in the papers and on the radio there was talk of war, talk of bombings, reports of the failure of

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one country after another to withstand the attacks of the hated Huns, who with typical Boche brutality were sweeping across Europe. At last Neville Chamberlain returned from Germany with a lot of inept, inane, asinine talk about "peace in our time", and from Germany, of course, there came reports of loud raucous laughter at the lanky Englishman who had come there with his furred umbrella thinking that he could settle the peace of the world. Soon after a ranting Hitler went on radio full of brash bombast and a day or two after England declared war.

Months rolled by, and the war was not getting anywhere, it was the period of the phoney war. One day a policeman came to Alan, carefully ascertained that he was Dr. Alan Bond, and then said that his mother, Mary Bond, had committed suicide and the body was now in the Paddington Mortuary.

Alan was shocked almost out of his mind, he did not know why but this was the most terrible thing he had ever heard. Suicide! For years he had been preaching against suicide and now his own mother had committed such an insane act.

Soon there came a stepped-up war with bombs dropping on London. All the time there were reports of German successes, the Germans were winning everywhere and in the Far East the Japanese were sweeping all before them. They took Shanghai, they took Singapore. Again Alan tried to join one of the Services, and again Alan was rejected being told he was of more use where he was.

The raids became worse. Night after night German bombers came across the coast and made for London. Night after night the dock areas were bombed and the East End of London was set afire. Alan worked very closely with the A.R.P. people — the Air Raid Precautions people — and indeed had an A.R.P. post in the basement of the house. Night after night the raids continued. Fire bombs rained down, thermite bombs bounced off rooftops, and sometimes going right through to set an entire house on fire.

There came the night of a very bad raid indeed. The whole area seemed to be on fire, the wailing, moaning of the sirens went on continuously. Hoses from fire appliances snaked over the roads and made it impossible for the doctors to use their cars.

The night was a moonlit night, but the moon was obscured by the red clouds going up from the fires, showers of sparks flying about everywhere and all the time the hellish scream of falling bombs, some fitted with sirens to their tail fins to increase the din and increase the terror. Alan seemed to be everywhere, helping pull bodies out of wrecked shelters, crawling through holes which had been forced in basements to bring relief from pain to shattered bodies inside. On this particular night Alan stood getting his breath and getting a cup of tea from one of the emergency canteens.

"Whew!" The A.R.P. warden with him looked up and said, "That was a close one." Alan looked away and saw the whole skyline in flames, billowing smoke was everywhere. Above it all there came the "thrum-thrum-thrum" of the uneven, unsynchronized engines of German aircraft. At times there came the "chatter-chatter-chatter" of British night fighters shooting their machine guns at the invaders outlined by the fires below.

There was a sudden "Woomph" and the whole world seemed to tilt. A whole house

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leapt up in the air, disintegrated and came down in pieces. Alan felt screaming agony envelop him. The air raid warden who was untouched looked around and screamed, "Oh my God, the doc's hit!" Frantically the A.R.P. men and the rescue squad tried to pull blocks of masonry off Alan's legs and lower abdomen.

Alan seemed to be in a sea of fire, the whole of his being was apparently being consumed by running fire. Then he opened his eyes and said weakly, "No point in both-ering with that, men, I'm finished, just let me be and go on and look for someone not so badly injured." With that he closed his eyes and lay for a time. He seemed to be in a peculiar state of ecstasy. "This isn't pain," he thought to himself, and then it occurred to him that he must be hallucinating because he was floating above himself upside-down. He could see a bluish-white cord linking his body in the air to the body on the ground, and the body on the ground, he saw, was completely smashed from the navel down, he was just a smear as though raspberry jam had been spread on the ground. And then it flashed across his mind that today was his thirtieth birthday. With that the silver cord seemed to wither and fade and Alan found himself floating up just as though he were in one of the barrage balloons floating above London.

He floated upwards, he could see shattered London receding from his gaze, he was upside-down. Suddenly he seemed to bump into a dark cloud and for a time he knew no more.

"Fifty-Three! Fifty-Three!" a voice seemed to be dinning into his head. He opened his eyes and looked about, but everything was black. He seemed to be in a black fog. Then he thought to himself, "I don't know about this, seems familiar somehow, wonder where I am? Must be having an anaesthetic or something." And as he thought that the black cloud became gray and he could see shapes, moving figures, and then it all came back to him. He was in the astral, so he smiled, and as he smiled the clouds, the fog and the mist all vanished and he saw the glory of the real astral plane. About him were his friends for only friends could be on such a plane. He looked down at himself with shock for a moment and then hastily thought of the first garment he could think of — the white coat he had used in St. Maggots. Instantly he was clad in a white coat, but he was shocked for a moment at the gales of laughter which greeted him, then he looked down and remembered that his last white coat had been waist length because in the hospital he had been a specialist.

The real astral was very very pleasant. Alan was taken off by joyous friends to a Rest Home. Here he had a room which was a very pleasant room indeed, he could look out on to glorious parkland with trees such as he had never seen before. There were birds and tame animals wandering about, and no one harmed any other creature.

Alan soon recovered from the trauma of death on Earth and rebirth into the astral, and then a week later, as was always the case, he had to go to the Hall of Memories where alone he sat and watched everything that had happened in his last life. At the end of that period of time which could not be measured a gentle voice said from "Some-where", "You have made good, you have done well, you have atoned. Now you may rest here for a few centuries before planning what else to do. Here you can do research or

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anything you wish. You have done well."

Alan walked out of the Hall of Memories to be greeted again by his friends, and together they went off so that Alan could find a home where he could enjoy himself and think what would be the best to do.

I believe that all people, no matter who they be, should be taught that there is no death, only transition. And when the time of transition comes a beneficent Nature smooths the way, eases the pain, and makes conditions tranquil for those who *believe*.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE old house was still, as still as an old house ever can be. Occasionally in the darkness of the night there came a mutter from an aged floorboard as it rubbed against its neighbor and apologized for the intrusion into its privacy.

The old house was at rest after a trying day. No longer was it possible for it to slumber its life away through a warm noontide. The old house had fallen upon evil times, taxation, demands, expenses for expensive restorations. The old house was unhappy at the throngs of mindless visitors who came surging through the corridors, flocking through the rooms like a herd of demented sheep. The old house felt its floorboards groan and its timber sag slightly under the unaccustomed load after so many years of quietude. But The Family had to go on and had to raise the money somehow, so after much soul-searching and much internal strife parties had been taken to tour the historic mansion.

Hundreds of years ago the house had been built as a manor for a man of high class, a man who had served his king nobly and well, and had been elevated to the peerage for his devotion. The house had been built lovingly and well by sturdy workmen who lived upon ale and cheese and hunks of bread, and who did everything properly for the pride of doing a proper job. So the house survived, survived the baking heat of summers and the chilling draughts of winter when every timber wanted to shrink away in the icy blasts which swept around it. Now the gardens were still well-kept, the main fabric of the house was still well secured, but some of the boards began to creak, some of the archways had the sag of old age, and now after a day of being trodden on and littered by the sticky papers of careless children the old house had reverted again to quietude.

The old house was still, as still as an old house ever could be. Behind the wainscot little mice squeaked and scampered in their play. Somewhere, high above, an owl hooted at the moon. Outside the chill night wind rustled among the eaves and occasionally tapped a long branch of a tree against the windows. But no one lived in that wing, "The Family" lived now in a smaller house in the grounds, a house where in more prosperous times the head butler and his wife had had their domain.

The highly polished floor shone in the moonlight making weird reflections against the paneled walls. In the sightless eyes as they had peered down throughout the centuries. At the far end of the Great Hall the stately grandfather clock chimed the quarter to twelve. Somewhere on a sideboard cut glasses tinkled gently as in echo they whispered

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the chimes to each other. From another room not so far away there came the higher tones of a granddaughter clock repeating the quarter to the hour.

All was still for a moment and then the grandfather said, "Granddaughter clock, are you there, can you hear me?"

There was a click and a whirr as a cog slipped, and then came the high voice of the Grandfather clock: "Yes, Grandfather, of course I can hear you. Do you have aught to tell me this night?"

The grandfather clock carried on its muted voice, "tick tock, tick tock, tick tock", and then raising his voice he spoke, "Granddaughter, I was born at the end of the seventeenth century, my long case was polished first in 1675, and since my pendulum was first set swinging I have pondered on the mystery of life, long have I lived, long have I pondered. The humans around us have such a short span of life, they have no time to think, really, of all that there is to know about life. Are you interested, granddaughter?"

The granddaughter clock, sitting in state in a ladies retiring room, nodded her head slightly to the tremor of a passing heavy locomotive and its attendant trail of freight cars. And then she said gently, "Of course, grandfather clock, of course I am interested in hearing of that of which you have thought so long throughout the centuries. Tell me and I will listen, and I will not interrupt until such time as my Purpose makes it necessary for me to call the hours. Speak, grandfather clock, knowing that I am listening."

The grandfather clock muttered in his throat, his long case was magnificent, more than seven feet tall he loomed in the semidarkness above the highly polished floor. No fingermarks marred his case for a special footman had the task of keeping these wonderful antiques in good health, clean and of strong voice. Grandfather clock had his face to the moonlight. Looking out of the window beside him he could gaze over spacious parklands with age-old trees spaced like rows of soldiers on parade. Around the trees were the close cropped lawns and here and there bushes, rhododendrons, and many bushes brought from far far lands.

Beyond the bushes, although grandfather clock had never seen so far, there were pleasant meadows where the horses and the cows of the estate cropped the sweet grass and, like the old house, dreamed their life away.

Closer, just out of sight of grandfather clock, there was, he had been told, a very very pleasant pond about thirty feet across, it was, so a traveling clock had told him. The surface had many broad lily pads on which at the right time of the year fat frogs sat and croaked. Grandfather clock had indeed heard their croaking and thought maybe their mechanism needed oiling, but the traveling clock had explained it all to him, had explained, too, about the fish in the pond, and abutting the far end of the pond there had been a large enclosed aviary, some thirty feet long and about ten feet high, in which multicolored birds led their life.

Grandfather clock mused upon all this. He looked back along the centuries seeing the lords and the ladies coming towards him in their gorgeous garb so different from the drab denims with which humans seemed to be uniformly clad during these decadent

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days. Grandfather clock pondered until he was aroused from his reverie by, "Grandfather clock, grandfather clock, are you well? I am waiting to hear from you, grandfather clock, you were going to tell me many things of the past, of the present and of the future, and of life and of the meaning thereof."

Grandfather clock cleared his throat and his pendulum went, "tick tock, tick tock, tick tock", and then he spoke: "Granddaughter clock," he said, "humans do not realize that the swinging pendulum is the answer to the riddle of the Universe. I am an old clock and I have stood here for so many years that the base of my case is becoming warped and my joints creak with the change of the weather, but I want to say this to you; we, the clocks of ancient England, know the riddle of the Universe, the Secret of Life, and the Secrets Beyond."

The tale which he told to the granddaughter clock was a new tale, a tale which had been in the making for centuries, a tale which started far far beyond living memory. He said that he had to blend modern technology with ancient science because the modern technology is as yet ancient science.

"The trees told me," he said, "that many many thousands of years ago there was another science, another civilization, and all that which is now considered to be modern and modern inventions and developments were even then obsolete."

He stopped a moment, and then said, "Oh, I must strike the hour. The time has come." So he stood firm and tall in the Great Hall and from his long case there came the preliminary click and the whirring and the chimes, and then he struck the midnight hour, the hour of twelve when a day dies and a day is born, when yet another cycle starts. And as he finished the last stroke of twelve and his hammers stopped and quivered he waited patiently for granddaughter clock to repeat her message to all who listened in the stillness of the night.

Granddaughter clock was tall and slender, not more than about a hundred years of age. She had a very pleasant voice and a remarkably clear chime, free of unwholesome vibrations, free of clatters and clicks. But, of course, that is as one would expect from just a young person who had endured not much more than a hundred years. Now she stood with the beams of moonlight partly filtered by the waving branches outside making their way through the tall window, and flickering fingers of light over her case, embellishing the ornaments on her pinnacles, and at times touching the hands which stood together upright like hands of a person in prayer praying for help during the newborn day.

She gave a little cough and then her wheels started to revolve, the hammers raised and fell upon the rods. She hammered out the notes of her song. That completed, the strike of the hours came, one, two, three, and all the way on to twelve. At the final twelfth stroke she quivered slightly with all the effort she had expended, her hammers shivered and the weights at the end of her chains rumbled a bit as they sought a fresh footing in the case. She said meekly, "Sorry, grandfather, I am sorry I have kept you waiting, I am a minute late I know, but soon that will be put right. Will you continue?"

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Grandfather clock smiled to himself, "It was right," he thought, "that young people should pay respect and should show deference to those who were so much older." He smiled and said, "Yes, granddaughter clock, I will continue.

"Throughout the ages," said grandfather clock, "humans have sought religion to console them in the hardship of their unnatural life. They have always sought a God to be as a personal Father looking after them, watching over them, looking at them only and giving them preferential treatment over all other humans. There always has to be a God," he said, "someone who is omnipotent, someone who can be prayed to and from whom one hopes to obtain a favorable answer to the prayer."

Granddaughter clock nodded her agreement, nodded in sympathy with passing distant heavy traffic, and somewhere a clumsy mouse bumped into an ornament and sent it skittering upon the table. With a squeak of terror the mouse jumped off the table and raced for the nearest hole, diving down with tail waving frantically in the air.

Grandfather clock resumed his story: "We must also bring into consideration," he said, "modern technology which, of course, is merely a recrudescence of old technology. Everything that exists, everything that IS is just a series of vibrations. A vibration is a wave which first goes up and then goes down, and goes up again and down again throughout eternity just as our pendulums keep swinging first to one side, where it stops for a fraction of a fraction of a second, and then swings down to the other side." Grandfather clock was silent for a moment, then he chuckled to himself as the chain moved down one tooth over the brass wheel inside and the weight at the bottom gave a little jiggle of joy at being one tooth further down toward the ground.

"I know," he said, "that all things that exist have their positive and their negative phases, first to one side and then to the other side. I know," he said with increasing solemnity, "that at one period of time when the Pendulum of Life is to one side of its swing the God in charge is the God of Good.

But the God of Good in such a position gets lulled into complacency and he doesn't pay enough attention to what is going on around him and the Pendulum of Life, which was stopped for its change of swing, starts again and swings down. The God of Good is lulled into a sense that all is well, but the Pendulum goes down and starts up to the other side of its swing, and there the God of Ill, whom the humans call Satan, is waiting with avidity the swing of power which is now his turn. Evil is such a strong force," said grandfather clock, "it is such a very, very strong force. Good will not believe the bad which evil is, so Good doesn't fight hard enough, doesn't struggle hard enough, and so we have the bad force that we call Satan making the most of its opportunity. The Pendulum of Life swings up, and at the end of its swing, as with the end of all swings of all pendulums, it stops for the fraction of a fraction of a second before starting down again, and the God of Evil does his greatest evil during such time. And then when the Pendulum starts down again gradually he loses power, and as the Pendulum goes up again towards Good then Good takes the throne once more."

"Ah, grandfather clock," said a small voice from the shadows, and like a shadow itself a sleek black and white cat eased out from the blackness and sat in a moonbeam

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gazing up at the old old clock. Moving forward the cat reached up and with soft paws rubbed at the bottom of the case. "Grandfather clock," said the cat, "I could climb up your case and sit on your head, but I like you so much I would not be disrespectful. Tell us some more." The cat moved back to the moonbeam and sat facing the clock, but not to waste any time she decided to wash her face and her ears. From time to time she looked up at the old clock who, gazing down fondly at the cat, said, "Wait little cat, I am a clock and my time is circumscribed. I have to wait now and chime the quarter so that all humans who are conscious may know that we are fifteen minutes into the newborn day. Little cat, hear me, and then a minute later hear my granddaughter. We will tell the time and then we will talk again."

On the still night air the chimes of fifteen minutes past the hour rang out. Outside the window a stealthy poacher who was moving silently to try to steal eggs from the nearby hen roost froze in his tracks for a moment, and then smiled complacently as he moved on, moved on towards the window where granddaughter clock was ready. As the shadow of the poacher crossed her window she, with much higher voice, chimed the minutes. Once again the poacher stopped and then, with hands shielding his face from the sidelight, he tried to peer into the room. "Bloomin" clocks," he said, "'nuff to scare the livin' daylights out of any good thief!"

So saying he moved on past the window and into the shadows, and some minutes after there came the sleepy murmur and protests of disturbed hens. There was silence in the house, as much silence as there could be in such an old house. Boards creaked, stairs whispered their complaint at having to remain in such a position so long. Throughout the house there was the vague scurry of tiny feet, and, of course, the ever-present ticketty, ticketty, ticketty, and tock, tock, tock. Or the bigger tick tock, tick tock of the grandfather clock. All these were the normal sounds of a living house.

The night wore on. Outside the moon went on her way leaving dark shadows around the house. Night creatures came out and went about their lawful occasion. Small foxes ventured out of their dens and took an early look at nightlife upon earth.

Night wore on, with the night civilization of nocturnal creatures going about their allotted path. Stealthy cats stalked their prey, and often there was a sudden spring and a muttered curse in feline as the unlucky cat missed.

At last the eastern sky showed a lightening of the shadows, and then faint streaks of red appeared as the probing fingers of the sun felt out the way ahead, lighting up the tops of distant hills and even exaggerating the darkness in the valleys beneath. Then nearby a rooster crowed raucously at the first sign that there would be another day. For a shocked moment all Nature stood still, and then there was a sudden rustle and scurry as the creatures of the night accepted their warning that dawn was about to break, accepted and hastened off to their homes in various parts of the undergrowth. Night birds found their perches in dark corners, bats returned to steeples, and the creatures of the day started that uneasy stirring which preceded the full awakening.

In the Great Hall grandfather clock went "tick tock, tick tock, tick tock." He was not talking now, this was the wrong time of the day to talk, there might be humans about and

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clocks did not reveal their secret thoughts to unheeding, unbelieving humans.

In the past grandfather clock had commented about humans saying, "Oh humans always want proof of everything, they even want proof that they are humans, but how can you prove a thing?" asked grandfather clock. And then he continued. "If a thing is true it needs no proof because it is self-evident that the thing is there, but if a thing is not true and if it is not there then no amount of "proof " will prove that it is there so there is no point in trying to prove anything."

The light became brighter, the day became older. Soon there was much activity about the house, cleaning women came and with mechanical devices brought uproar to the quiet old mansion. There was the clatter of dishes and the hum of voices from the servants' quarters below the main floor. Then well-known footsteps came along the hall, a footman: "Good morning, grandfather clock," he said, "I am going to give you your daily rub and wipe your face for you." The footman went to the old clock and carefully cleaned the glass and checked the time. Then he opened the front of the long case and gently raising the weights one by one he pulled on the chains so that the clock should be wound without placing undue strain upon the antique teeth.

Closing the clock case he patted it lovingly and then set to work to polish an already highly polished surface. "Well, grandfather," he said, "you're all done up nice and tidy ready for the gaping idiots who will come. I'll just put the barrier in front of you and then we're done." He picked up his cleaning cloth and his polish and moved back, and then very carefully he put one eye of the red rope into a hook in the wall and went across to place the other eye in the corresponding hook at the other side so that no one could approach grandfather clock without stepping over or under the red rope barrier.

The day moved on as days usually do, and soon there came the roar of motors and the yelling of undisciplined children, accompanied by shrieks from bad-tempered mothers and slaps to try to keep the children in order.

The main doors were opened. The footmen stood back, and there was a surge of smelly humanity reminiscent of a herd of elephants during the period of must, which of course, is the elephants' mating season and when they go very wild indeed. The tide of humanity surged into the Great Hall.

"Mama, Mama, wanna go, wanna go!" yelled a small boy.

"Sssh!!" cautioned the mother. Then suddenly there was a much louder yell from the child, "Mama, Mama, gotta go, gotta go!" Mama just reached down and gave the boy a sound slap with the fat flat of her hands. For a moment there was silence, and then a strange trickling sound. Sheepishly the little boy said, "Mama, I've bin!" and he stood there with dripping trousers and a spreading puddle around him. From the side one of the footmen, with a resigned sigh, moved forward with a mop and a bucket as if such things were everyday occurrences.

From the darkness beneath a deep over-stuffed sofa two green eyes peered out with interest. The black and white cat had her favorite station there, beneath that sofa, and almost every day she would watch with fascinated interest the undisciplined chil-

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dren and the sluttish matrons who thronged into this old house commenting upon this, ruminating about that, and all the time leaving chocolate papers, cardboard cups — anything — on the furniture and on the floor regardless of the work it caused to others.

Grandfather clock at the end of the Great Hall looked on with an impassive face. He was somewhat disconcerted, though, when another small boy rushed up the hall and was stopped only by the red braided cord stretched across its width. An attendant moved forward quickly and grasped him by his collar just as he was about to duck under the rope. "Get out of it, can't you!" growled the man, turning the boy about and giving him a shove in the back to get him moving.

The throng grew thicker, thicker mentally too. They gazed at the pictures on the wall, mouths wide open, chewing and chewing the great gobs of stuff dangling from rooftop to tongue. It was all strange to them, they could hardly believe that they were having a great privilege in getting a glimpse of the past. All they wanted was a glimpse of next week's pay check!

All things must end, even bad things, although bad things seem to last much much longer than do good things. One has a good experience and it seems to be over almost before one knows it has started, but a bad experience — ah! that is something different. It seems to be prolonged, it seems to be dragged out unendingly. But, of course, an end to it does eventually come. So it was on this day. As the darkening shadows fell across the windows the crowds thinned and there was the roar of many motors as great chartered buses pulled away. Then the mass of people grew thinner still until there were two or three, and then one or two, and later none. Thankfully the cleaning staff moved like a swarm of locusts throughout the building, picking up papers, cartons, Popsicle sticks, all the variegated litter which untidy humans want to deposit on any available spot.

Outside in the grounds much broken glass had to be picked up, soft drink bottles, cartons, and from under certain well favored bushes ladies' underwear could be hooked out. The animals who looked on often wondered how a person could remove certain garments and then be so careless as not to put them on again. But then, of course, the animals wondered also why people should have these garments in the first case. They were born without them, weren't they? Still, as the animals said to themselves so frequently, there is absolutely no accounting for the oddity of human misbehavior.

At long last night had fallen and the lights had been turned on while "The Family" gathered around to assess the day's takings and to balance the day's profits against the day's losses in damage done, plants uprooted, and windows broken because it was a rare day indeed when some snotty-nosed little lout did not heave a brick through a greenhouse window. Eventually all the work was done, all the accounting was over. The night security man went around with his flashlight and his time clock booking in to various points in the building at pre-allotted times. The lights were extinguished and the nightwatchman — one of several — moved down to the communal security office.

The black and white cat crept into the Great Hall through a partly opened window, and walked sedately up to grandfather clock. "I have just had my supper, grandfather," she said, licking her lips. "I don't know how you keep going without having any

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food except a pull on your chains every so often. You must feel hungry! Why don't you come out with me and we'll chase a bird or two and I'll catch you a mouse."

Grandfather clock chuckled deep within his throat, and said nothing. The time was not yet for everyone knows that no grandfather clock speaks before a quarter to midnight for that is leading up to the witching hour when all is magic, when the whole world seems different, and when those who are normally voiceless find the wherewithal with which to voice their thoughts. Grandfather clock for the time being could only think and say — as was his wont — "Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock."

Away in what had been a very important ladies' retiring room granddaughter clock mused upon the happenings of the day. She was extremely fortunate, she thought, that she was not pushed off her base when two fighting hooligans had tripped over the rope barrier and fallen at her feet. Fortunately two wary attendants seized the men and bundled them unceremoniously out the door where they were grabbed by outside security people and bounced out of the grounds. Granddaughter clock thought of it with a shudder of horror which raised a metallic clatter in her throat. She thought, too, how pleasant it had been in the early morning when the young footman had come to her, attended to her attire, and fed her by raising her weights and then had very very carefully adjusted the time so that now she chimed and struck in exact synchronization with grandfather clock.

Everything was still, as still as things can be in an ancient house. The clocks went on with their monotonous tick tock, the traveling clock said ticketty, ticketty, ticketty, and longed for the quarter to midnight so that he could tell of some of his adventures. And the black and white cat looked at the hands of grandfather clock and sighed with resignation thinking the time is not yet, we'll never get the old clock to talk until a quarter to midnight. The black and white cat walked across the Hall and leaped lithely on to an old chest. There upon a drape she stretched out and went to sleep but not for long. Incidents outside the window kept awakening her and she had to crouch and make mewing noises as foolish birds came fluttering by the window. "Oh! If I could only open this window" exclaimed the exasperated cat, "I would teach you disturbing birds a lesson or two — not that you would live to profit by it." The bird saw the black and white shadow inside the room and flew off with squawks of alarm.

At last grandfather clock chimed and chimed again, and struck the half hour of eleven at night. Granddaughter clock chimed and struck as well. The traveling clock seemed to go faster with its ticketty, ticketty, ticketty, and the black and white cat opened one eye — the right one this time — and looked up at the clock face to see if the hands were indeed at half past eleven.

Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock, went the clocks in unison, and then at last there was the metallic rattle in grandfather clock's long case, a metallic rattle and then the rumble as a chain started to move and a weight descended. It was a quarter to midnight. Grandfather clock sang out the chime with gusto. A quarter to midnight, nearly the time when a day dies and a day is born, nearly the time when one cycle turns and becomes the reverse cycle. "And now is the time," thought grandfather clock, "for TALK!"

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"Grandfather clock! Grandfather clock!! I bags first talk." said the black and white cat who had leapt to her feet, jumped to the ground, and raced to a position in front of the well polished long case.

Outside the moon was shining a little brighter than it had the night before because it was approaching its full and this was a quieter night. No storm clouds scudded across the sky, there was no wind to rattle the branches in the trees outside, all was quiet, all was still, and the moon shone brightly inwards.

"Well now, young cat," said Grandfather clock, "so you claim to talk first, eh? Well, it seems to me you have already talked first with what you said. But what do you want to talk about, young cat?"

The black and white cat interrupted her toilet and sat up straight and said, "Grandfather clock, I have been thinking a lot of what you told us last night. I have been thinking of what you said about the Pendulum. Now, grandfather clock, if good and bad alternate with each swing of the Pendulum then they don't have much chance to do good and bad, do they, because they only get about a second for each swing, or so I understand. How do you account for that, grandfather clock?"

The black and white cat sat back on her haunches with tail spread straight out behind her. She was sitting squarely as though she expected a blast of wrath from grandfather clock to upset her balance. But no, grandfather clock had the wisdom of old age and the tolerance of old age too. He merely cleared his throat again with a metallic tinkle and said, "But my dear little cat, you do not think that the Pendulum of the Universe beats at one second intervals, do you? It beats over a period of thousands and thousands of years. Time, you know, little cat, is entirely relative. Now here we are and it is fourteen minutes to twelve here in England, but in other countries it is a different time, and even if you went to Glasgow instantly you would find that it wasn't fourteen minutes to twelve but it might be fifteen minutes. It is all very mysterious, really, and of course my own figuring is limited to my own particular output of pendulum strokes."

Grandfather clock stopped speaking for a moment while he drew breath in the form of another link of the chain going over the tooth cog inside the case. Then when the weight had stopped its descent he spoke again.

"You must remember, little cat, that our unit — the unit of us clocks, that is — is twenty-four hours. Now in each hour there are sixty minutes, and in each minute there are sixty seconds, so that means three thousand six hundred seconds in an hour. So in twenty-four hours a one second pendulum beat will have moved eighty-six thousand four hundred times."

"Whew!" said the cat, "that IS a lot of strokes, isn't it? Oh my, I could never work out a thing like that!" And the black and white cat looked at the grandfather clock with renewed admiration.

"Yes," said grandfather clock, warming to his subject and his pendulum beating even louder, "but the Pendulum of the Universe has a completely different system because we are dealing with twenty-four hour periods in our assessment, but we must re-

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member that in the real time beyond this Earth the world goes through a period of one million seven hundred and twenty-eight thousand years in each cycle, and all cycles go in groups of four as does my strike of the hour, the quarter, the half and the three-quarters. So, you see, we are following a good tradition. The Universe goes in fours and so do we striking clocks."

The black and white cat nodded wisely as if she understood everything that was being said, as if all this profound knowledge was well within her capacity, and then she said,

"But, grandfather clock, how about when the Pendulum is at the end of its swing? You said it stops for a fraction of a fraction of a second. What about in what you termed "the real time"?"

Grandfather clock chuckled to himself and said, "Ah! Yes, of course, but when we have one million seven hundred and twenty-eight thousand years to play with then we can afford to allow the Pendulum to stop at each end of the swing for many years, can't we? But it is all so profound that not many humans can comprehend it, and not many clocks can understand it either. We do not want to give you a burst brain, little cat, with all this knowledge so perhaps we should drop that particular subject."

"But, grandfather clock, there is one thing I particularly want to ask," said the little black and white cat, "if God is at one side of the swing and Satan at the other then how do they find time to do any good or any bad?"

The glass on the front of grandfather clock's face shone brightly in the moonlight, and then after an instant or two he answered, "When we have all these years for a swing then we can afford to have about two thousand years at the end of each swing, so that at one two thousand years interval we have good, at the next two thousand years we have bad, and then the next swing will bring good again, and the swing after that brings bad. But," said grandfather clock hastily, "I must stop, the time has come for granddaughter clock and I to strike together the hour of midnight when all Nature is free to make a change, when the day dies and a new day is born, and when the Pendulum swings it goes first from good and then to bad, and from bad to good — excuse me." And grandfather clock stopped abruptly in his speech while the wheels within him whirled and the descending weight rumbled, and from grandfather clock's long case came the chiming of the hour of midnight followed by the deep toned strike of the twelve. And then close by granddaughter clock echoed and faithfully repeated the chime and the strike.

On the little table to the side the traveling clock grumbled to itself and said, "What a windy garrulous pair they are. They hog all the speaking time for themselves. Bah!"

CHAPTER NINE

"A VIRUS is too small to be seen through a microscope and there are more living organisms, viri, bacteria, etc., resident on the skin of a human being than there are humans alive on the Earth. About four thousand of these organisms are crowded into every

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square centimeter of the arms, and on the head, armpits and groin the figure may be in excess of two million."

Vera Virus sat in her Pore Valley thinking of all the problems which beset the people of the world called human. Beside her Brunhilde, her closest virus friend, sat. They quivered pleasantly as only jellylike viri could do. Then Vera said, "Oh, I am in such a state of confusion, I have been asked for my vital statistics and how can I get over to the people that I am a glorious 25nm? Oh, why don't we change to the metric system and have it done with, that would be so much simpler."

Brunhilde wobbled violently and that was meant to be a laugh. Then she said, "Well, you just need to tell people the vital statistics of the nm. Just tell them that one nm is a billionth of a meter, and if they are still so stupid that they don't know what a meter is — we all know it is a thing the electricity man reads — just say that it is equal to one millimicron. Frankly, Vera, I think you are making a mountain out of a molehill."

"How can you be so asinine, Brunhilde?" retorted Vera with very considerable acerbity, "you know there are no molehills here, and as for moles, well, they haven't been invented yet." She sniffed — if a virus can sniff — and relapsed into jellylike silence.

The world called human was a very peculiar place. All the inhabitants of the world lived in the valleys or pores because, for some remarkable reason which none could ever understand, the world was covered except for certain places with a very strange blanket or cloud or something. It seemed to be immense pillars crisscrossed with such space between it that any agile virus, given a few years, could climb straight up through that barrier and look at space from the surface of this strange material. But it was truly remarkable because every so often the whole world would endure a Flood. Millions of virus people would be instantly drowned and only people like Vera, Brunhilde, and certain friends of theirs who had seen the wisdom of living in pore valleys survived.

It used to be a devastating sight to raise one's antenna above the valley and look at all the bodies littering the plane between adjacent valleys. But no one could ever explain what it was. They knew that at certain intervals of time the great barrier covering most of the world would be removed and then would come the Flood, and then would come another barrier which was violently agitated. After that there would come yet another barrier, and for a time peace.

Vera Virus and her friends were sitting in their Valley of the Pore in a site which was never covered by this barrier, they could look up at the skies above, and Vera, looking up on this occasion, said, "I often wonder, Brunhilde, if there are any other worlds besides ours?"

A new voice broke in, a gentleman virus called Bunyanwera who had been born from a Ugandan culture, or at least that had been in the racial memory of his ancestors, now he was just another inhabitant of the world called human. He said, "Oh nonsense, Vera, nonsense, you know perfectly well there are thousands, millions, of worlds like ours. Haven't we glimpsed them in the distance at times? But then, we don't know if they

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have any life upon them, do we?"

A fourth voice called out, "Well, I think this world was made specially for us. There is no other world in existence with life on like ours. I think the whole world was made by God just for us viruses, look at the advantages we have, there is no form of intelligence to be compared with ours, we have special valleys dotted about and if they are not made specially for us how did they come about?" The speaker, Catu Guama, was an erudite sort of fellow, he had been around a bit, he had even moved as far as the next Valley of the Pore, so the others listened to his opinion with respect. But then suddenly Bunyanwera burst out, "Oh nonsense, nonsense, There's no such thing as a God, of course there isn't a God. I've prayed time after time for little things to be done for me, and if there was a God do you think He would allow one of his children to suffer? Look at me, I've got part of my jelly crushed, it happened when I got too close to the top of the Valley and a piece of the barrier scraped my backside. No, of course there isn't a God, if so He would have healed me."

There was an embarrassed silence for some time, and then Vera said, "Well, I don't know about it, I've prayed too but I've never heard an answer to my prayers and I've never seen any angel-viruses floating about in the air. Have you?" The others sat in silence for a moment, and then a most dreadful catastrophe occurred; from out of space a great "something" swooped down and scraped all the great pillars on which they relied for shade. "Oh my goodness me, my goodness me," said Brunhilde as the great "something" swept by, "that was a close shave, wasn't it? We were nearly wiped out that time!"

But having escaped one danger from outer space - it must have been a U.F.O., they thought — another matter happened. A sudden stinging flood fell upon them and they had a shockingly antiseptic smell pour over them, and all of a sudden Vera, Brunhilde, Bunyanwera and Catu Guama ceased to exist as the world called human dabbed astringent on his face.

Miss Ant sat placidly on a great stone. Carefully she brushed her antennae and made sure that all her legs were clean and tidy. She had to be sure she was looking absolutely as perfect as she could be because she was going out walking with a soldier ant who had been given unexpected leave. She turned to her friend, Bertha Blackbeetle, who was snoozing in the heat of the noonday sun. "Bertha, you great oaf!" she said, "give me a good examination, will you? Make sure everything is as it should be."

Bertha roused up and opened one eye, and looked with care at Miss Ant. "My, oh my, you sure do look swell." she said, "our soldier boy will be knocked straight off his legs when he sees you. But it's too early, you know, sit down and enjoy the sunlight."

Together they sat and looked out on the desolate world before them. There were great boulders, immense boulders which reared up twenty times the height of Miss Ant, and in between there was dry, dry earth, not a blade of grass was to be seen, not a bit of weed, nothing but desolation and vast peculiar marks in the soil.

Miss Ant looked up at the sky and said, "Bertha, all my life I have wanted a soldier boy of my own, and I prayed that I should have such a friend. Do you think my prayer has

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been answered?"

Bertha wobbled one of her antennae, and then said slowly and carefully, "Gee, I don't know, I don't believe in a God myself. If there is one He's never heard any of my prayers. When I was much younger, in fact when I was in the grub stage, I often used to pray to a God I had been told about but the prayers were never answered, and I came to the conclusion that I was — well, you know — wasting my time. What's the good of believing in a God if He is not godlike enough to give us a bit of proof? That's what I say." Idly she turned a complete circle and sat down again.

Miss Ant carefully knitted with her front legs, and then said, "It really is a problem, you know Bertha, it really is a problem. I wonder if all those points of light we see at night are other worlds, and if they are other worlds do you think anyone lives on them? Funny to think if this is the only world and we are the only people on it. What do you think, eh?"

Bertha heaved a sigh of exasperation, and then said, "Well, I don't know that there are other worlds or not. I think it's something quite different. I met another insect some months ago and he said — he was a winged insect — that he had flown a long long way and then he came to a tremendous pillar, oh such a vast pillar that I couldn't even believe what he was telling me. And he said that at a certain time every night the top of the pillar went bright. Now I can't believe that there would be a world which only came bright when our world was getting dark. What do you think?"

Miss Ant was getting more and more confused. Well, I always was taught that this world was made for us insects. I was always taught that there is no form of life greater than us insects. That's you and me, Bertha. So if that is true, if our priests are right, then surely there can't be anything more clever than us, and they'd have to be a lot more clever than us if they could turn their world to existence only when this world went dark. I don't know what to believe, but I think there is a big Purpose behind it all, and, like you, I am getting a bit tired of praying to a God who never bothers to answer."

Time went on and the shadows began to lengthen. From a short distance away an ant-voice called out, "Hey, Miss Ant Miss Ant, where are you? I've got a message for you." Miss Ant got to her legs and moved forward over to the edge of the big stone. "Yes, yes, what is it?" she called down looking at another ant standing some distance away.

The other ant looked up and wiggled with her two antennae, and then she said, "Your soldier boy has gone and left you. He said that after all he thought you weren't the right ant-girl for him, so he's gone off with that fast young hussy who lives way up there," and she turned pointing. Miss Ant sat down with a thud, her whole world collapsed about her.

She had been praying for a soldier boy to come and make love to her, and then they would make a nest together. But now — what did life have for her now?

Miss Ant and Bertha started suddenly as a tremendous thudding came along the ground, thudding like an approaching earthquake. They stood to the full extent of their legs trying to see what was happening, but before they could move dark shapes swooped out of the distance and Miss Ant and her friend and the messenger ant, too, were squashed

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into pulp as schoolboys just leaving afternoon classes swept across their playground on their way home.

Away in the country the grass was standing tall. It was beautiful there, healthy grass as green as green could be, the suns had warmed it, the rains had nourished it, and now it was a field worthy of anyone's delight.

Deep in the depths of a field which seemed to be a veritable forest to its inhabitants two little field mice played about among the stalks of grass, played about on the earth, and then ran up the thicker stalks and jumped from one to the other. One jumped high and leapt right up above the top of the grass. As he came tumbling down with shrieks of merriment he fell at the feet of an old, old mouse. "Be careful, youngster," the old mouse said, "you're being too gay, you know. There's no gaiety like that in this world. Soon a great Mystery will occur, all our forest will tumble down before the onslaught of such a vast Machine that none of us can even guess what it is. By the state of this grass I can see that we haven't much longer, so we'd better return to our burrows." The old mouse, a wise old she-mouse, turned and toddled off. The two young mice looked at each other and then looked at her — looked at her retreating form. Then one said, "Oh, isn't she a miserable old spoil sport." The other said, "Yes, I guess she doesn't like children, she wants to keep us as slaves bringing nuts and stuff like that, and getting nothing for it."

For some time the young field mice played about together, and then a rustling chill in the air reminded them that evening was starting, so with one startled glance up at the darkened sky they hurried along together to their home.

They sat in the dusk at the mouth of their burrow communing in spirit, nibbling a piece of grass, looking up occasionally to be very sure that night owls did not see them. After a time the round orb of the silvery moon started its glide across the dark sky. One little mouse said to the other, "Wonder what it's like up there? I wonder if there are any field mice on that big thing that we see so often?" "Oh don't be stupid," said the other field mouse, "of course there is nothing except this world." Then he added with a note of uncertainty in his voice, "Oh yes, I often think the same as you, I often think, well, there must be worlds with field mice on besides this world. I know our priests tell us that this world was made especially for field mice and there is no higher form of life than us field mice."

"Ah yes," said the other field mouse, "but then the priests tell us we should pray. Well, goodness me, I prayed hard enough, I prayed for fresh cheese and things like that, but never, never have I had a prayer answered. I think if there had been a God then it would be such a simple matter to put down a bit of fresh cheese for a young field mouse every so often. What do you think?" He turned to his companion expectantly, but the other said, "Well, I don't know, I'm sure. I prayed as well but I've never had any proof that there is a field mouse God nor have I ever seen any field mice angels flying about."

"No," said the other, "only these night owls and people like that." On that solemn thought they turned on the instant and dived down into their burrow.

The night wore on and various creatures of the darkness came out looking for food, but the little field mice were safely hidden in their burrow. In the morning the day

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dawned bright and there was warmth in the air. The little field mice set about their daily task. They left their burrow and off they went into the green forest of grass to see what food they could get for the day.

All of a sudden they crouched against the earth, their blood feeling as if it had turned to ice within them. A most hellish unearthly uproar was coming toward them, a noise such as they had never heard before. They were too frightened to move. One whispered hurriedly to the other, "Quick, quick, let us pray for protection, let us pray for salvation."

And those were the last words the little field mouse said because the farmer with his reaping machine drove straight over them and their bodies were cut to shreds and flung among the cut grass.

From the great pyramid with its flat top and turreted sides came the blare of trumpets, their brazen voices echoing and reechoing through the valley at the foot of the pyramid, which was indeed a holy temple.

People looked at each other in affright. Were they late? What was happening? Such a blaring occurred only in times of crisis or when the fat slovenly priests had something to say to the people. With one accord they dropped what they were doing and hastened along the well-trodden path leading to the plinth of the pyramid. Here there were broad, broad steps leading perhaps a third the way up the pyramid, and all the way around there were extrusions, extensions, almost like balconies, or perhaps a better term would be walled walks, and along these walled walks or balconies the priests were wont to take their leisure. Two by two they would go along, hands clasped behind their backs or held within their ample sleeves. Two by two they went along thinking of the words of God, pondering upon the mysteries of the Universe. Here in the clear atmosphere so high up in the Andes it was so easy to see the stars at night, so easy to believe in other worlds, but the population of the valley was now coming in force up the great steps and surging into the main body of the Temple.

Within the dim interior so highly charged with incense smoke people coughed a little, and here and there a countryman used only to the freshest of fresh air rubbed his eyes as they started to water and smart as the acrid smoke of the incense attacked them.

The lights were dim, but at one end of the Temple stood a vast idol of polished bronze, a sitting human figure, and yet no — it was not quite a human, it was "different" in subtle ways. It was superhuman, but it towered many stories high, and the people at its base walking about could only reach up to half knee height.

The congregation entered, and then when the priest in charge saw that the great Hall was almost full there came the deep booming of a gong. Sharp eyes, unaffected by the incense smoke, could see the great gong quivering, quivering at the right hand of the godlike figure. The booming continued, but no one was hitting the gong, no one was doing anything within yards of it, but the booming continued.

And then, without human hands, the great doors of the Temple closed. For a moment there was silence, and then upon the knee of the God there appeared the High

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Priest clad in flowing robes. His hands and arms were raised above his head, he looked down at the people and said, "God hath spoken to us, God is dissatisfied with the help you give your Temple. So many of you withhold your tithe, God will speak to you." With that he turned and went on his knees facing the torso of the great figure. Then the mouth of the figure opened and from it came a booming. People dropped to their knees, people closed their eyes and clasped their hands together, and then the booming gave way to a strong, strong voice, "I am your God," said the figure. "I am disappointed at the increasing lack of respect shown to my servants, your priests. Unless you are more obedient and more generous in your offerings you will be afflicted with plagues, with murrains, and with many sores and boils, and your crops shall wither before your eyes. Obey your priests. They are my servants, they are my children. Obey, obey, obey."

The voice faded out and the mouth closed. The High Priest got to his feet again and turned to face his congregation. Then he presented a fresh set of demands, more food, more money, more services, more young women for the Temple Virgins. Then he disappeared. He did not turn and walk away, he disappeared, and the Great Temple doors opened again. Outside there were lines of priests on each side, and each had a collecting bowl in his hands.

The Temple was empty. The idol lay silent. But no, no, not so silent because a visiting priest in the Temple was being shown around by a very very close friend. From the idol came whisperings and rustlings, and the visiting priest commented upon it. His friend replied, "Oh yes, they are just giving a check of the acoustics. You haven't seen inside our idol, have you? Come along and I'll show you."

Together the two priests moved to the back of the idol and the resident priest pressed his hands in a certain pattern on an ornamentation. A hidden door opened and the two priests entered. The idol was not solid, it was a series of chambers. They went in and climbed a series of stairways until they got up to chest level. Here was a very strange room indeed; there was a bench and a seat before it, and in front of the seat there was a mouthpiece which led to a series of tubings intricately convoluted which led upwards to the throat.

At one side there were two seats and a series of levers. The resident priest said, "Those two levers are operated by two priests, they activate the jaws and we have had so much practice that we can move the jaws exactly in time with the speech." He moved over and said, "Look out here, the speaker can see the congregation at all times without being seen himself."

The visitor moved over and looked out through narrow eye slits. He could see the Great Temple, he could see cleaners busy sweeping the floors. Then he turned to see what his friend was doing. His friend was sitting in front of the mouthpiece, he said, "We have a special priest who has a very authoritative voice, he is never allowed out to mix with other people because he is the voice of our God. When required he sits here and he says his message through this mouthpiece. First of all he removes the slide here and then his voice goes out through the mouth and so long as this slide is in place nothing one says here can be heard outside."

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Together they moved down into the main body of the Temple again, talking all the time. The resident said, "We have to do this, you know. I don't know if there is a God or not, I often wonder, but I am very sure that God does not answer our prayers. I have been here now for forty years and I have never yet known a prayer answered, but we have to keep our authority."

The visitor replied and said, "Yes, I stand upon our high peak at night and I look up at the sky, and I see all the little pinpoints of light, and I wonder if they are holes in the floor of heaven or if it's all imagination. Is there heaven? Or are those pinpoints of light other worlds? And if there are other worlds then how do they go on there?" The resident replied, "Yes, I have many doubts myself, there must be some controlling entity but it does seem to me from my own experience that he never answers prayers. That is why a thousand years or more ago this metal figure was built, so that we priests could maintain our power, our hold, over people, and possibly help them where God ignored them."

I BELIEVE that all life is made up of vibrations, and a vibration is just a cycle. We say a thing shakes. Well, we mean it goes up and it goes down, and it goes up and it goes down. If you draw a line on a piece of paper then you can draw another line curving up from your first line, curving over, and coming down again and going the same distance down before turning to go up. Here we have a cycle, a vibration, a pictorial diagram of a vibration similar to that used in biorhythm or in symbols for electric current of the alternating variety. But all life is like that. It is like the swinging of a pendulum. It goes from one side of a neutral point, through the neutral point, and up an equal distance to the other side. And then the pendulum swings again and goes through the procedure time after time after time.

I BELIEVE that all Nature goes through cycles. I believe that everything that exists is a vibration, alternating from up to down, from positive to negative, from good to bad, and, if you come to think about it, without having bad there would be no good because good is the opposite of bad as bad is the opposite of good.

I believe in a God. I believe very firmly in a God. But I also believe that the God may be too busy to deal with us on an individual basis. I believe that if we pray we pray to our Overself, to our superior soul, if you like, but that is not God.

I believe that there are two Gods, the God of Good - positive, and the God of Bad — negative. The latter we call Satan. I believe that at very definite intervals — at opposite swings of the pendulum — the good God rules the Earth and all things living and then we have a Golden Age. But the pendulum swings, the cycle moves on and then the power of the good God, the positive side, wanes and after it passes a neutral point where the powers of good and bad are equal then it goes up to favor the other side of the swing, the bad, Satan. And then we have what is so often called the Age of Kali, the age of disruption, the age when everything goes wrong, and looking about the Earth today at vandals, wars, politicians, can you deny that we are now in the Age of Kali? We are. We are coming up to the peak of the swing and conditions will get worse and worse until at last the swing will be at its topmost point for bad and conditions will be very bad indeed. Wars, strikes, earthquakes, the powers of evil let loose unchecked. And then, as always,

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the pendulum will change direction, will fall, and the powers of evil will wane and there will be a resurgence of better feeling upon the Earth.

Once again the neutral point when good and bad are equal will be reached and passed, and the pendulum will climb up to good, and as it climbs up things will be better and better. Perhaps then when we have a Golden Age the God of this Universe will be able to listen to our prayers and will, maybe, afford us some proof that He does care about those lodged down here on this world.

I believe that at the present time the press, the media, television and all the rest of it contribute very largely to the increase of evil because we read even in the press itself how children of seven years of age are taught to commit murder, children of ten years of age set up murder gangs in Vancouver. I believe that the press should be suppressed, and television, radio, and films should be censored.

But about Gods. Yes, I believe there is a God, in fact I believe there are different grades of Gods. We call them Manus, and people who cannot understand the concept of Gods should look at conditions in a big departmental store. It doesn't matter what name you choose for the store, let us say a big chain of supermarket stores. At the very top you have God, the President or General Manager — depending on which country you live in and the terminology employed.

But the man at the top is the all-powerful one who dictates what shall be done. Yet this man, this Chairman of the Board of Directors or President or General Manager, is so busy with his immense power that he does not have time to deal with the smallest office boy or the smallest minor clerk who hands out food and puts it in bags. This particular man, the God of the supermarket, represents God Himself, the Head Manu of our Universe, the one who has control of many different worlds. He is so important, so powerful, so busy that he is not able to deal with individual worlds, not able to deal with individual countries, and definitely not able to deal with individuals — individual humans, individual animals, for animals have as many rights as humans in the celestial scheme of things.

The supermarket President or Manager cannot see to everything himself so he appoints under managers and supervisors and overseers, and that corresponds in the spatial system to Manus. There is God the Almighty, and in our own scheme there is the Manu of Earth, the Manager who is responsible for the overall management of this Earth. Under him there are subordinate Manus, supervisors if you like, of each continent of the Earth. Supervisors or Manus of each country of the Earth. They guide the destiny of the countries, they influence what the politicians are doing although the politicians can make enough mess without any Manus to help them!

There is one creature who is known as "the Eye of God". The cat. The cat can go anywhere, do anything, see anything, for who takes much notice of a cat strolling around?

People say, "Oh it's only the cat, it's nothing." And the cat goes on watching and reporting good and bad. Evil forces cannot control cats. Cats have a divine barrier which prevents evil thoughts, that is why in one century cats are venerated as Divinities, and in

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another century they are execrated as disciples of the devil because the devil people want to get rid of cats who report on evil deeds, and there is nothing the devils can do about it.

At the present time the Manu controlling the Earth is Satan. At the present time Satan is very well in control of the Earth, not much good can happen at the present time. Look for yourself at that evil Satan-like group, the Communists.

Look at all the cults with their misleading "religion" and how they try to gain dominance over those who are foolish enough to join their evil cults. But eventually Satan will be forced to abandon the Earth, forced to withdraw his minions just as a business which fails has to close down. Soon there will become a time when the pendulum will reverse its direction and with its reverse of direction evil will weaken, good will strengthen, but that time is not yet. We face increasingly bad times until the pendulum really swings.

Think of this; you look at the pendulum, you think it is always moving but it is not, you know, it is not even moving at the same speed because the pendulum is at its height on, let us say, the right side, and then it falls down with increasing speed until it is at its bottommost point. There it has its maximum speed. But then the weight of the pendulum climbing up to the other side slows the arm of the pendulum and at the end of the stroke the pendulum stops, quite definitely the pendulum stops for an appreciable time before falling again to climb up the other side.

Depending upon our time reference we are able to say that with the average clock the stoppage is for a fraction of a second only. But if we go to a different time where seconds are years or perhaps even thousands of years, then the time the pendulum is stopped may itself be two thousand years.

And if the pendulum is stopped on the bad side a lot of bad can be done before the pendulum and its cycle goes down, down, down, and up again to the other side to provide good and equal opportunity.

The Golden Age will not be in the time of any who are living now. Conditions will worsen very definitely and will continue to worsen throughout the years left to those of us who are senior citizens. But children or grandchildren will indeed live to see the start of the Golden Age and they will partake of many of the benefits there from. But one of the great things which needs to be done is to overhaul the religious system. Now Christians fight against Christians, and the Christian religion indeed, since it was so distorted in the Year 60, has been the most warlike religion of all. In Northern Ireland Catholics are murdering Protestants and Protestants are murdering Catholics. Again, there is war between Jews and Moslems, and what does it matter what "religion" one follows? All paths should lead the same way Home. We may have to diverge a bit here and there, but all religions should lead the same way Home. What does it matter that one person is a Christian and another person is a Jew? What does it matter that the Christian religion as it was in the time of Christ was formed from a combination of Far Eastern religions? A religion should be tailored to the exact need of the people to whom it is going to be preached.

Religion should be very different indeed. It should be taught by dedicated men,

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not by those who want an easy living and a comfortable sure income as now seems to be the case. There should be no discrimination and definitely no missionaries. I know to my own bitter cost that missionaries are the enemies of the true believers. I know that in China, India, and many other places — especially in Africa — people pretended to be converted to Christianity just because of the free handouts which the missionaries gave. We must also remember that those missionaries with their prudish minds insisted on native peoples being clothed in unsuitable garments, and those missionaries indeed brought tuberculosis and other dread diseases to people who previously in their own natural state were quite immune to such illnesses.

We should also remember, perhaps, the Spanish Inquisition where people of different religions were tortured, burned alive, because they would not believe in the same imaginations as the Catholics believed in, or thought it was policy to pretend to believe in. The Golden Age will come. Not in our time, but later. Perhaps when the God of our world has more leisure during the period of that good cycle He may consider investigating humans and animals a bit more. The Gardeners of the Earth are well intentioned, no doubt, but everyone will agree that at times it is necessary for the owner of the property to step in and see what his gardeners are doing and perhaps order a change or two here and there.

I believe in God. But I also believe that it is useless to pray and pray and pray for our own trivial wants to God. He is too busy, and, in any case, at this period of time our cycle or rhythm or pendulum is at its negative aspect, and during the negative aspect evil, negativeness, bad is in force. And so it is — well, if you want something pray to your Overself instead.

And if your Overself thinks it is good for you — and good for the Overself! — you may get it. By that time you probably will not want it.

CHAPTER TEN

MARGARET THUGGLEWUNK cautiously opened one eye and peered apprehensively at the full light of day. "Oh my God!" she groaned, "what a girl has to do for a living!" Slowly she opened her other eye and then got the full impact of the full light of day. Pain shot through her head so that she thought it would split. Then she groaned as she put her hands on the small of her back. The ache was dreadful. For some moments she lay there trying to recall what had happened the night before. "Oh yes," she recalled, "I was after that Beamish contract and the awful man said I'd have to stay the night with him if I wanted any more contracts from him. Oh my goodness, whatever happened to me? Straight sex I can take but I feel I've been in bed with a bad-tempered elephant." She groaned and groaned and at last tottered off into the bathroom and flopped on to the seat. After much retching and vomiting she bathed her head in a wet towel oblivious of what was happening to her hairdo in the process. At last she felt somewhat recovered and looked about her. As she did so her face grew dark with rage, "That no-good bum of a husband," she said, "I told him to get the place cleaned up before he left for work this morning." At the thought of her husband she stirred again and tottered out of the bath-

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room into the kitchen.

Bemusedly she looked about, and then her eyes spotted a note propped up against a milk bottle. "I am tired of living with a liberated woman." the note said. "Equal opportunities can go too far, and when you are sleeping around night after night that lets me out. You'll never see me again."

She took the note in her hands and looked at it intently. Then she turned it over, held it up to the light, and at last turned it upside-down as if some inspiration would come to her. But no, no inspiration, no joy, no sorrow either. She was just another of those females who call themselves liberated women, the worst curse of civilization. I am one of those who have utter contempt and loathing for these women. They are not wives, they are just useless ullage which are dragging down the race.

In 1914 or so a great tragedy occurred in Britain. Oh yes, the Great War started, the Great World War, but another war started as well; the so-called battle of the sexes. Women were designed to bear the children which continued the race of Man, but in 1914 women went to the factories and donned men's attire. Soon they were drinking and smoking and using such foul language that no man would ever use, no matter how depraved. Soon women were griping and bellyaching saying they had had a raw deal, but no woman has ever said what she wants. She wants, it seems, to be an unmitigated savage and have no thought at all for the continuance of the race.

Then there are those who put "Ms" which doesn't mean a thing in the world science, but, actually, if they took an occult warning from it it would show that women are becoming masculine and soon they will be becoming impotent.

It really is too dreadful for words how some young women go to bed with any man who takes their fancy. Sometimes it is almost a case of raping the man in the process. And then when a child is born in or out of wedlock the mother rushes back to the factory or the store or whatever it is almost before the child is born, and the child is farmed out or left to the tender mercies of a baby sitter. As the child grows up he or she is turned out on the streets to become dominated by stronger and older children. Soon there are gangs going around — listen to this which is from *The Alhertan* for July 15th 1976. This is just an extract, of course. It says, "Hit-boys for Hire." After the usual blurb etc., the article goes on to say, "Somewhere in the Vancouver area is a ten year old boy who has made himself available to the underworld for contract killings."

It appears that this young fellow, a ten year old, leads a gang of a hundred boys who will kill to order for payment. A few weeks ago there were reports in a paper that a boy even younger had committed murder, and now since that there is another case where a boy killed his alleged friend.

In the old days the mother used to stay at home and raise a family, and she made sure that they were decent citizens, made sure that they were children who would obey, and what greater task can there be than to have the mother who will stay at home and raise a suitable family and make sure that the family is looked after. It is clear that many of these women who will not stay at home are just being influenced by evil forces.

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In the First World War women went to factories, offices, and even joined the Forces, and so advertising people found that there was now a doubled source of income for those for whom they advertised. And soon the economy was geared so that it was necessary for women to work, or so it appeared on the surface. All the advertising stressed that women could do so much by buying this, that, and some- thing else, and, of course, they fell for it hook, line, and sinker.

The Governments, too, found that when women worked and earned high money then there was more income tax, more money from purchase tax, and all the rest of it. And women still go on being so utterly stupid that they miss their natural vocation and, instead, just go out to work to get into debt, to buy things which are no earthly use to them.

Some women nowadays have no taste at all, they haven't the vaguest idea of dress sense, they think that the height of fashion is to get out in a fresh blouse and skirt every day, stuff which has been bought on the never-never and usually is the cheapest material possible, material with gaudy patterns on it.

Have you looked at women lately, the younger women, that is? Have you seen their flat chests and their narrow hips? How are children going to be born? With the aid of forceps, no doubt, and then they will get their brains distorted and pinched.

Have you seen how marriage is deteriorating nowadays? Some women want to just shack up with a man and have as much sex as they want, and then if the man crosses them in any way at all they just pick up their traps and out they go to the nearest man who will have them.

In the esoteric world there is the male principle and the female principle, two opposite poles, and for the continuance of the world as an inhabited place it is necessary that men and women be unlike each other, otherwise women will become sterile and no matter how many times they try, no matter how hard they try, there still will be no offspring.

Perhaps we should go out and do violent things to the advertising people, the ones who lure women on to the path of racial destruction. Oh yes, it could be so. It is made clear in the Akashic Record of Probabilities that such a thing can happen. It happened millions of years ago.

Far, far beyond even a racial memory there was a civilization which reached quite a high standard. The people were purple and they were not necessarily human, not quite human, in fact, because the women had six breasts, not two as they do now, and there were other subtle differences.

There was a very high standard of civilization, and a very warm family life, but then women decided that they should not stay at home and raise the family, they should not bother about a husband or children, they were being persecuted — they never said how, nor did they ever say what they really wanted, but obviously something had gone wrong in their minds. And so they broke away from marriage, and as soon as the baby was born it was shoved off to any home that would take an unwanted child. Soon the

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quality of the race deteriorated, degenerated, and became moronic.

In time women became completely sterile, and the race died out.

Do you know anything about gardening? Have you ever seen a very choice apple tree which has been neglected? At one time that apple tree produced prize apples, prized for their firmness, their sweetness, their color and everything. But then if it is neglected for a time you get a thing like a crab apple, wizened, warped, shriveled.

Have you ever seen thoroughbred horses which have been neglected and allowed to breed with wild moorland ponies? Well, I will tell you what the result is after a few generations the animal result is the lowest of the low because all these things seem to breed down, breed down to the worst parts of everything.

And so it is with humans. Children are neglected, they have no discipline, and so we get armed gangs, we get vandals—anything which is evil and ugly. We get rapists, and we get old people slashed and mutilated. Quite recently there was a case where two women found an old man who was disabled, he had artificial legs, so for the few cents which the man had in his pockets the women beat him up and broke his artificial legs and left him more than half naked in a deserted street.

Quite recently there was another case involving women; two women went to a house occupied by an old-age pensioner woman. They forced their way in and then they beat up the old lady, and she only escaped with her life by pretending to be dead. The women — if women they can be called — robbed the house and took all the money the old lady had, leaving her quite destitute. Old-age pensioners do not have much to live on!

Do you know what undisciplined children grow up to be? Do you know what happens when children are allowed to grow up into teenage state without any discipline, without any thought of trying to get a job?

Willy the Wolf loped along the midnight street. The garish gleam of the neon lights flickered and flared in the night wind as the lamp holders swayed, bowed, and swayed again. This had been payday and even at this late hour many people were still about. The shopping malls, ever ready to take advantage of payday, stayed open very late when the money was ready to flow.

Willy the Wolf was a shady character, one of those very undesirable people who seem to creep out of the woodwork on a Sunday morning, slouching and lurching like a drunken moron along the early morning avenues. Even his parents had no time for him, and eventually had turned him from the shelter of the parental roof.

Father worked, mother worked. Willy stayed at home filching whatever he could. If his Father's pocket book fell into his hands when the old man came back in a drunken stupor he took what he could. Willy was ever ready to purloin his mother's purse and sneak whatever currency he could — and blame it on his father when accused.

Willy had quite a reputation in the neighborhood. He was always slouching around in dark streets, trying car doors to see which was locked, and those which were not

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locked — well, Willy was there to see what could be stolen from the glove compartments or even taking hub caps from the wheels.

His parents were sick of him. At last finding that Willy would not listen to them, finding that he would not do anything about getting a job after he was thrown out of school, they locked the doors against him and changed the locks, and made sure the windows were locked too. So Willy went away just a few streets. He went to the unemployment agency and was able to fake reasons for not taking work, and then with a different name obtained from a stolen pocket book he also got money from the Welfare people.

But — Willy the Wolf loped down the street with predatory eyes aswivel for opportunity, his head turned this way and that way. He looked to the front and then he looked back. As he turned frontways again he suddenly stiffened and increased his pace. Just turning the corner ahead of him was a young woman carrying a heavy handbag, a late worker from one of the many busy offices.

Willy loped on, taking it easy. He saw she was waiting to cross the road, and just as she was about to cross the light against her turned red Willy loped on and drew level with her. He slid one leg in front of her and with his right hand he pushed on the nape of her neck. Like a log she fell, face down, hitting her forehead against the curb of the sidewalk.

Willy grasped her handbag from her nerveless hand and without breaking his stride loped on. Turning a corner into a dark lane going alongside an apartment building, he looked over his shoulder briefly to see if there was any pursuit. He saw the young woman on the ground with a spreading stain of red, red which looked black under the greenish neon lights. With a chuckle he just slid her handbag under his leather jacket, zipped up the front of the jacket, and sauntered along as if he had not a care in the world, as if he were the most innocent person in the world. Then he came to an even darker part of the back lane. Here there was a garage which had been deserted for some time. It was locked up quite securely, but the garage people had gone out of business and they were waiting to have the property sold.

The garage was locked up but many weeks before it had closed down Willy had stolen a spare key, he had gone into the garage and demanded the key to "the gents" and as the assistant turned to unhook the key Willy had snatched up the door key which was lying beside the cash register.

Now Willy went into the garage and crouched down inside the front door. There was plenty of light here because a street light just outside shone brightly through the garage window. Willy crouched on the floor and tipped the contents of the handbag on the ground. Chuckling to himself he put away all the money he could find, and then he rummaged through the other contents, gazing at the peculiar things which women keep in their handbags, reading with great difficulty the pile of letters which also were in that purse. At last, deciding that nothing more was worth having, he kicked the remaining items aside in a pile of rubbish.

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On the uncaring sidewalk the young woman lay stunned and bleeding. Past her swirled the heavy night traffic, traffic coming from night clubs and cinemas, late workers returning home, and other workers going to their shift. Drivers gaped from passing cars and speeded up so that they should not become involved. The few pedestrians on the sidewalk hesitated, stopped to stare, and then walked away. From a store doorway a man stepped forward. He had seen it all, he could have apprehended Willy but, then again, he did not want to be involved, he had nothing to thank the Police for, why should he help them? Come to think of it, why should he help the young woman? He did not know her. So leisurely he strolled forward, stopping by her he bent down and looked at her having a guess at her age, wondering who she was, and then he reached down and felt through her pockets to see if anything was there. Nothing was in the pockets, so he looked at her hands and saw that there was an engagement ring and a dress ring on two fingers. Roughly he pulled them off and slipped them in his pocket. Then, straightening up, he prodded her tentatively with a foot —wondering if she was alive or not — and then he moved back into the shadows.

In the slums of Calgary the turgid half life of the populace swirled uneasily on for day after day with a mounting crime rate, and with the newspapers shouting in great headlines that something should be done. There were articles about the increasing rapes, the increasing muggings, but the general population were unconcerned, they were concerned only if THEY became involved. Calgary night life went on as before, troubled, troubled, with seething crime below the surface ready to break out into the open at any time. There was talk of closing the parks by night, talk of increased patrols by night, talk, and nothing more. The city went on as before and day followed day, and night followed night.

Again the midnight hour. In the distance a clock was chiming. Nearby a car horn shrilled insistently. Some burglar breaking into a parked car had set off an alarm so the car shrilled away and the shrilling went unheeded, no one cared, no one wanted to become involved.

Again the midnight hour. Willy the Wolf loped along the midnight street. His once-white turtle-necked jersey stained with the remnants of many a meal swayed and stretched as he loped and, as before, gazed around for prey.

Sighting what he desired he tensed to alertness and increased his pace. A little way in front of him a small old lady carrying a heavy bag shuffled along into the night.

Obviously she was disabled, handicapped, arthritic maybe, but she was shuffling along as if she could hardly put one foot before the other, shuffling along as though she were having difficulty in completing her journey. "Well, she won't!" chortled Willy to himself.

Quickly he caught up with her. With practiced ease — a skill developed with many a successful encounter—he slid a leg in front of the poor old lady and then a hand poised at her back to push her forward, to trip her on to her face and grab her bag. But — oh, surprise! — the little old lady ducked and swung her heavy brick-laden bag at Willy's head.

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For a sick moment Willy saw it coming. Then with a smashing crash it caught him beside the head. He saw bright lights. He had an excruciating pain and he shrieked, and then the whole world went black before him, and like all his victims before he tumbled down to the ground and rolled over on his face.

The callous, careless onlookers on this busy night stared in torpid astonishment as the little old lady placed a foot on the small of Willy's back, crowed her pleasure like a rooster on a dung heap at break of dawn, then she did it again and walked away with a jaunty step.

The night wore on. A minute, an hour? It was of no moment to Willy. At last a police car patrolling around stopped at the untidy bundle on the sidewalk. The car door opened and an old policeman got out, hand on his gun. He moved over and with a careless foot just flopped the body over on to its back. The policeman gazed down and then — recognition. He called over to his companion still in the car, "Oh, it's Willy, he's met it at last."

Returning to the car, for he was the observer, he picked up the microphone and called for the ambulance to come and collect one badly injured person. In the darkness of a nearby apartment facing that crossing the little old lady sat at her window peering through the curtain, and as she saw Willy thrown quite unceremoniously into the ambulance — the ambulance men knew him as well — she laughed and laughed and laughed before undressing and going to bed.

The Akashic Record which certain people can see when they go into the astral plane is a record of all that has ever happened upon the world to which it applies. It shows the origin of the world from the first gaseous ball on to the semi-molten state. It shows everything that has happened. It is just as though the world were a person, and that person had parents who had a cine camera working from the moment of birth all through the person's life until the moment of death, so at any time a person with the necessary knowledge could turn to the reel of film and find out what happened, when, where, and how. That is how it is with all worlds.

In addition there is a Record of Probabilities, a Record showing what is HOPED will happen, but the behavior of individual countries can modify what will happen. For instance, now there has been a big earthquake in the Far East and China has been cracked. Well, I personally believe that that is caused to a large extent by all the atom bomb tests underground, performed in America and in Siberia. It is like hitting a certain structure and finding that apparently no harm has been done, but then at some remote part of the structure cracks or fractures appear. Aircraft engineers know this when a bad landing of an aircraft can cause damage whereby cracks will appear in the tail!

Many years ago I was asked by a cultist to come in on a scheme that he had. He was going to sell people the idea that he would go into the astral - with his briefcase, presumably— consult the astral and come back with the information which he would then sell to the inquirer for a very large sum of money. He wrote to me about it and tried to get me in on the scheme saying that we would be millionaires in no time. I refused, and that is why I am still poor!

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The Akashic of women shows that these things about Women's Lib should not have happened. There should not have been all the hate, all the bitterness which women have shown about it. Now, most women are decent people, as I am well aware, and if they go in for this liberation movement it is just for fun and they do not take it too seriously.

But there are a certain number of crackpots, women who stuff "Ms." in front of their name meaning, I suppose, "Mostly Stupid," and that is very suitable because that is what they are — mostly stupid. But in putting that "Ms." in front of their name instead of "Miss" or "Mrs.", or putting nothing in front of the name, they are invoking wrong vibrations, and vibrations are the essence of all existence. They are invoking bad vibrations FOR THEMSELVES.

If things go on like this as these women seem to want soon other forces will make fresh arrangements, they will think that they will give people of Earth a real taste of their own foolishness, and then it will be a reversion to a state which happened in a far-gone civilization, a civilization which existed so long ago on Earth that there is no record of it except on the Akashic.

In that civilization when all the people wore purple skins instead of black, yellow, brown, or white, women betrayed mankind to a certain sect of the Gardeners of the Earth, the super-beings who look after this world, or who are supposed to. It seems they have fallen down on the job pretty badly of late. But, anyway, women led astray some of the male Gardeners and that made a lot of discord with the Gardeners wives. But a new race was formed by their union on the Earth, and it was dominated by women. Women took all the jobs, and there were few jobs available for men other than as menial servants — slaves almost — for men who were impotent. But in special luxury houses there were very virile "studs". They were there for the sole purpose of providing the necessary babies.

Oh yes, all this is perfectly true, it is so absolutely true that I tell you most sincerely that if you read my books — all seventeen of them — and you practice the things I tell you, then if your intentions are pure you can go into the astral and you can see the Akashic Record of this world. You cannot see the Akashic Record of individuals because — well, that would give you an unfair advantage over "the competition". You have to have special dispensation, as I believe they say in the Roman Catholic Church, before you can see the personal Akashic Record of any individual nearer than a thousand years. But in that long bygone Age when there was a matriarchy women were busy working much the same as Communist slaves have to work, and then the most beautifully formed, the most healthy of the women or those who were very well-in with the leaders, could go to the stud house for pleasure or, in the necessary cases, for procreation as well.

Can you imagine how it would be on Earth nowadays if there was such a thing? Can you imagine what the advertising people would put out for gullible women? "Polly's House of Pleasure — the Most Powerful Men Available, take your choice, what color you like, what shade you like, dimensions to suit your own choice. Reasonable fees, special terms for club membership."

But, anyway, as is always the case, an unnatural society eventually ends. So it was

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that the matriarchy ended. It was so unbalanced that it eventually toppled and that whole civilization died out.

Do you know why it was unbalanced? Think of your car battery, think of a battery in your radio, or anything which has a positive and negative. Supposing in some peculiar unknown way you could make the negative more powerful than the positive, then the whole thing would be unbalanced, wouldn't it, and wouldn't work after a time? That is what happened with that particular purple race. Life demands that there shall be equal positive and there shall be equal negative, there shall be equal good and equal bad to balance. There shall be equal masculine and equal feminine without which there cannot be any balanced coherent life, and the liberationists are trying to upset the balance of Nature, they are trying to ruin human ecology, and it just will not work, it is just making a lot of very bad Karma for the instigators because look at the troubles they are causing; they are greedy, and greed is one of the big curses of this world. The Golden Rule is that we should do unto others as we would have others do unto us. It is also better to give than to receive. If you give you add to your good Karma, but if you are trying to stir up disharmony and strife then it makes a very bad Karma indeed.

I am always highly amused at women who get married but then will not take their husband's name so as to make a balanced unit. Here in Canada we have an aspirant to the holy office of Prime Minister of Canada and that fellow has a wife who will not use his name, she calls herself "Ms." I believe it's MacTear or something like that, and its enough to make anyone shed a tear. But how can you have a balanced family at the head of a country when the two chief members of the family do not form a unit? You can't.

Then again, if women do not want to be wives, then why get married? If they do not want to be wives and they still want children — well, set up breeding stations the same as there are for cattle, because if women are like that then indeed they are cattle. I believe that there is more in bringing up children than just ten minutes or so of dubious pleasure. I believe that women were ordained by Nature to be mothers who could raise children, and if they just have children and then dump them on the sidewalk almost as soon as they can talk then they are breeding a race of loveless creatures, which is what we have at present. Now we have gangs of children willing to murder, gangs of children who go about in the parks breaking down trees, uprooting plants, doing anything they can to raise hell. In days gone by wives were indeed wives, they would stay by their husbands, they would help their husbands. The husband went out to earn the living, the wife stayed at home to raise the family and to train the newest members of the race of humanity.

Of course capitalists must pay for a lot of all this because these money-hungry people think that if women work there will be twice as much money. Sure, it is just fine to have money — I have never had much of it myself, but I would rather be honest than be like these capitalists who ruin civilization for the sake of grabbing a few bucks. Advertising men make such tempting offers with their credit cards and their installment systems and all that, that weak-willed people are tempted, and tempted they fall and get head over heels in debt, debt which they can only keep up with by taking one job or two jobs, or even three jobs. When I lived in Windsor I knew a man who had four jobs and he

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worked himself into an early grave. His wife had two jobs so that between them they had six jobs, and they were so heavily in debt that when the man died everything they had was seized by creditors. So why will people not live more reasonably, more economically instead of grabbing at anything they see just as a spoilt child grabs and yowls like a mad thing if anything is withheld.

I feel very strongly opposed to Women's Lib, as I hope I have made clear, because I have seen the results of this awful cult or whatever one calls it. I have seen it in the Akashic Record, and I have had thousands of letters telling me what misery some of these women have caused.

We now have arrived at a crossroads in the destiny of humanity, and if people do not take the right decision then there will not be a stable society. There will have to be a return of religion to life, it does not matter which sort of religion, I am not thinking of Christianity or the religion of the Jews, or the religion of Islam or Hinduism, or anything specific. It doesn't matter which religion it is, it doesn't matter what religion it is. We need a fresh religion because the old ones have failed so miserably. In Christianity, for example, what IS Christianity? Is it the Catholic faith? Is it the Protestant. And which one IS Christianity? If both are Christian then why are they fighting in Northern Ireland?

Then, again, there is the fighting between Christians and Moslems in Beirut, and then there are the Russians, whose only form of God is Communism. And according to what we hear of conditions in China, well, I don't think I would like to go out and see what things were like either. But there will have to be a better religion, there will have to be priests who ARE priests instead of just people who want a soft living without having to do much to get their money. That is what they are nowadays.

We are, as I said before, at a crossroads. We have to choose whether we shall have a balanced society, one in which men and women work together equally as partners and in which women look after their children instead of tossing them out for older and, possibly, more depraved children to teach. That is going to topple society. In Russia it used to be that all children were taken and put in homes to be raised by the State while the fathers and mothers were working in factories or on farms and communes. Well, it has been proved that that is not so good, Russian mothers now want to be with their children, they want to stay at home, and they are raising an awful commotion in Russia to get control of their children. No one knows what the result will be.

Old Hitler, who really did have some crackpot ideas, had special breeding stations. You probably have read all about it, but if some of you have not here is a brief idea of what it really was:

Party leaders were on the lookout at all times for very loyal, very healthy members of the Party who would make good parents. And then when a loyal, healthy young man and a loyal young woman were found they were sent off to great mansions in the country. There they were well-fed, well looked after, and after they had been built up a bit because German rations were pretty scruffy at that time, young men and young women were allowed to meet and pick their partners. When they had picked their partners and they had both undergone another medical examination they were allowed to stay to-

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gether for a whole week. Well, you know what happens when a young man and a young woman stay together for a whole week with no holds barred, so to speak, and everything they did approved by the Government. Well, when the child was born of such a union it was taken away from the mother and put in a special Home to be brought up with all the skill and science and Nazi knowhow available at the time. It was intended that they should form the nucleus of a super-race.

Twenty-five years after all this certain investigators went into the question of what had happened, and many of the children, now, of course, grown up, were traced, and almost without exception these children were found to be of lower mentality. Some, indeed, were morons which shows that not even Hitler could put a man and woman together, shake them up a bit and produce even a normal child!

By the time we reach the Year 2000 it will be known if the people of this Earth have to be wiped out like a lot of weeds and fresh stock planted. But if women will stay at home and be wives and mothers, as intended, then this particular race can continue into the Golden Age. It depends, ladies and Women's Libbers — who are not ladies — on you. What is your choice going to be? Classed as weeds? Or to carry on into the Golden Age with stability in the family?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

IT seems to me that we are dealing with metaphysics in this book, spirits, ghosts, etc., so perhaps it might be of interest to tell you — not too seriously — of the Tale of the Inn Keeper's Cat.

This inn keeper was quite a nice man and a real stickler for obeying the law. He had a good old tomcat who had been with him for many years, and this good old tomcat — I think it was a tortoiseshell cat or something like that — but, anyway, he used to sit on the bar near the cash register. One day the cat died and the inn keeper, who was very fond of him was absolutely desolated, and then he said to himself, "I know what I'll do! I'll have old Tom's tail cut off and mounted in a glass case and we'll keep it on the bar in memory of him."

So the inn keeper had a friend who was a taxidermist cut off old Tom's tail, and the rest of old Tom was buried. Old Tom, the inn Keeper's cat, had led a very good life. He had listened to all the people's talk as they came into the bar and he had sympathized with the men who said their wives did not understand them, and all that sort of thing. So old Tom, being such a very good cat, went to heaven: He got up to the Pearly Gates and knocked on the door and, of course, they were delighted to admit him. But then — oh misery, misery, oh what a shock! — the Guardian at the Door said, "Oh my goodness me, Tom, you haven't got your tail on. We can't admit you here without your tail, now, can we?"

Old Tom looked around and was absolutely shocked to find that his tail was missing and his jaw dropped down so much that he nearly made a furrow in the heavenly pastures. But the Guardian of the Door said, "Tell you what, Tom, you go back and get

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your tail and then we'll glue it on for you and you can come into heaven. But be off with you now, I'll wait for you."

So the inn Keeper's cat looked at the watch on his left arm and he saw it was nearly midnight. He thought, "Oh gee, I'd better be hurrying because the Boss closes at midnight, puts up the bar and all that, I must hurry."

So he rushed off back to Earth and scurried along the path to the inn. Then he knocked hard at the door and, of course, the inn was closed. So old Tom knocked again in the way he had heard certain favored customers knock. After a "few moments the door was opened and there stood the inn keeper. The man looked shocked and said, "Oh Tom, what are you doing here? We buried you today, you can't come back like this, you're dead, don't you know?"

Old Tom looked sadly at the inn keeper and said, "Boss, I know it's nearly midnight and very late for you but I've been up to heaven and they wouldn't let me stay there because I haven't got my tail, so if you'll just give me my tail back — you can tie it on if you like — I'll get back to heaven and they'll let me in."

The inn keeper put his hand to his chin, an attitude he often adopted when he was deep in thought. Then he cast one eye on the clock (but, of course, only metaphorically because he wouldn't have liked to cast his eye, he might have lost that and broken the clock as well), and then he said, "Well, Tom, I'm ever so sorry lad and all that but you know how law abiding I am and you know it's well after hours; and the law will not allow me to retail spirits after hours."

Well, after that, we should get back to the very serious business of writing this, which is the last chapter of this book. So— The gentleman from one of those ancient little countries bordering upon the Mediterranean — it was Greece or Rome or somewhere like that, I don't know where it was for the moment—but this gentleman stood upon his soapbox.

Plinius Secundus was his name and he was a very clever man indeed, he had to be, you know, he had to be very clever because as his name implies — Secundus — he was not the first but the second. You have probably read of these car rental firms who advertise so glowingly in the papers, there is one in particular who advertises that they are second and so they have to work harder. Well, Plinius Secundus did the same. He had to work harder to be cleverer than Plinius Primo.

He stood upon his soapbox. I don't know what brand of soap it was because the advertising men hadn't got around to labeling everything so much in those days, but he stood there teetering somewhat uncertainly because the box was flimsy and Plinius Secundus was not. For a moment he looked about him at the uncaring throng, and then he said, "Friends," but there was no reply, no one looked. So he opened his mouth again and this time he absolutely roared, "Friends, lend me your ears!"

He thought it was much wiser to ask people to lend him their ears because he knew them so well he knew they would not cut off their ears and walk on, if their ears stopped so would the owners and then they would have to stay and he wanted them to

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listen to what he had to say.

Still no response. He stopped for a moment again, looking at the scurrying crowds, all hell-bent on getting here, there, and everywhere else. Then he had a fresh approach; "Friends Romans, Greeks, Americans," but then he stopped in confusion, his mouth still open, he had suddenly remembered with a blush of shame that America would not be discovered for centuries yet. Then, as no one seemed to have caught the mistake he went on with his speech.

Now, I am a very kind person, really, some people think I am an old grouch, some people think I am a hard-faced old so-and-so. I know that because they write and tell me so. But, anyway, here following is a translation of what Plinius Secundus said. It is translated for you because, of course, you would not understand his language and nor would I!

"There is no law against the ignorance of doctors. Doctors learn upon their patients' shuddering bodies at the patients' risk. They kill and maim with impunity, and they blame the patient who succumbs, not their treatment. Let us do something to keep in check those doctors who would not obey the dictum that they should do no ill, that they should console the patient while Nature effects the cure."

Do you ever stop to think what a mess medicine is in? It is, you know, it really is a shocking mess. Nowadays the average doctor takes nine minutes to deal with the average patient from the time the patient comes before the doctor to the time the patient leaves the doctor, nine minutes. Not much time for personal contact, not much time to get to know the patient.

Yes, it is a very strange thing nowadays. It was meant that doctors should do so much for the sufferer, but now, after five thousand years of recorded medical history, no doctor can treat a head cold. If a doctor treats a head cold the cold can be considered to have ended two weeks after, but if the wise patient does not go to the doctor and just leaves the matter to Nature then the cold may be cured in fourteen days.

Have you ever thought how the average doctor weighs up his patient? He looks at a patient carefully for all of one minute, trying to work out how much the patient knows because years, and years, and still more years ago Aesculapius the Wise, came to the conclusion that the more a patient knows the less confidence he has in the doctor.

If things had gone right on this world and if the reign of Kali had not made such progress supported by the enthusiastic teenagers, Women's Libbers, etc., great developments in medicine would have taken place. For example there would have been aura photography which would enable any trained person to diagnose illness even before that illness attacked the body and then, by applying suitable vibrations or frequencies or cycles — call it what you will — the patient could have been cured before he was ill, so to speak.

But money did not come in enough to enable me to carry on adequately with research. It is a curious fact that any crummy lawyer can charge forty dollars an hour for his time, charge it and get it, and a typist can charge three dollars for typing a short one page letter, she can get that too. And people will pay oodles of cash for drink, entertain-

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ment, etc., but when it comes to helping in research - no, they "gave at the office", or something like that. So the science of aura reading has not been able to continue as I had hoped. I can see the aura at any time on any person, but that is not YOU seeing it, is it? It is not your doctor seeing it, is it. And I had worked with the idea that anyone with suitable equipment would have been able, to see the human aura.

When one can see the aura you can see schizophrenic people, how they are divided into two. It is like getting one of those long balloons inflated and then suddenly divide it in the middle so you have two balloons. Or one can see the approach of cancer to the body — through the aura, of course — and then by applying the correct antidote by way of vibration, color, or sound then the cancer could be stopped before it attacks the body. There is so much that could have been done to help the patient.

One of the big troubles seems to be that everyone nowadays is suffering from money-hunger. You get young people at school or college, they compare notes so they can decide which profession — the law, the church, or medicine — will offer them the most money and the most leisure, and as things are nowadays with medicine the dentists seem to have the most money!

What was really intended in this part of the cycle of life was that doctors should be truly dedicated people, people who had no thought of money, in fact, it was intended that there should be "medical monks," men and women who had no thought other than to help their fellow men and women.

They would be provided for by the State, given all they could reasonably want. They would be secure from income tax demands and things like that, and then they would be on call and they would do house calls, too.

Have you ever thought that a doctor who gets a patient to the office keeps him there perhaps four hours waiting and then sees him for a total of nine minutes — how can that doctor have an intimate knowledge of the patient's history?

How can that doctor know of the patient's hereditary patterns? And it is not a doctor-patient relationship, it is more like damaged goods being taken to the factory for repair. It is quite as impersonal as that, and if the doctor thinks the patient is going to be more than nine minutes of bother, well, he just slaps the patient in hospital which is much the same as being an article sent back for repairs and being stuck on the shelf for some time. The whole system of medicine is wrong, and in a Golden Age to come there will have to be something of what I have suggested, that is that all doctors shall be priests or at least attached to a religious Order. They will be dedicated people and they will be on call with regular shifts because no one would expect them to work twenty-six hours a day, but people do expect them to work more than six hours a day, as they do now.

One of the dreadful, dreadful things now is how doctors have several examination rooms. A doctor will sit in his office at one end of a corridor and stretched along the length of the corridor there may be four, five or six little cubicles each with a patient in. The doctor has a very hurried consultation with a patient and then directs him or her to a cubicle. While that patient is undressing or getting ready the doctor makes hurried vis-

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its to all the other cubicles, and it really is a mass production affair, just like battery hens where hens are confined in cages, tier after tier, row after row, and they are fed and fattened — food goes in one end and the egg drops out the other end. Well, it seems much the same with the patients. The doctor's words of wisdom go in at one end, that is the ears, and payment, either from Medicare or from the patient, flows in in a continuous stream.

Now this is not medicine.

The doctor does not always keep to his oath. Often he will go to the Club House and discuss the affairs of old Mrs. So-and-So, or laugh with his friends at how that old fellow wanted to and couldn't so What's going to happen to his marriage? You know how it is!

It seems to me that doctors get their license to practice and then they shut their text books for ever and ever and any further learning comes only by way of the pharmaceutical representatives who go around from doctor to doctor and try to drum up sales. The representative, of course, boosts all the favorable aspects of his firm's medications, but never, never does he tell about all the weird side-effects which might occur. Look at that affair in Germany when that dreadful drug was given to pregnant women and the resulting children were deformed, perhaps missing arms or legs or something else.

One gets the same thing with birth control pills. Women get themselves hocused and hypnotized by all the talk that they can have their fun and not have to pay the piper, by taking such-and-such birth control pills. Well, actual practical tests on the patients shows that there can be serious side-effects, cancer, nausea, and all that type of thing. So now the pharmaceutical firms have gone back to their metaphorical drawing boards and they are trying to devise other methods of baulking the nimble sperm, and preventing him from shaking hands with an eager ovum.

When the time comes there will be a quite infallible birth control method — no, I didn't say abstain! — the real method will be a form of ultrasonic emitter which will be tuned to the exact frequency of the man or the woman, and it will have the effect of knocking the sperm on the noggin so that it will not be virile, in fact, the sperm and the ovum can both be neutralized by ultrasonics if one knows how, and that will not cause any trouble to either of the participants "he" nor "she", but that is something which will come in the Golden Age, if there is a Golden Age.

Pain is a terrible thing, isn't it? And really, the doctors or the pharmaceutical people have not come up with any real solution for the control of pain. A few aspirins doesn't do it. Demerol is only a very temporary thing with possible side-effects. And then you get into the morphine or morphia range and you may get addiction. But I believe that the researchers should first of all take into consideration the theory that pain can be felt only by creatures with a nerve system, so they have to do something to put a barrier between the site of the pain and the receptor nerves.

My own experiences in hospital as a patient have not made me admire the medical world because I was taken suddenly very ill with truly horrible pains, and we were in

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a state of confusion because at the nearest hospital there was a technicians' strike or a nurses' strike, or something of that nature and they were not taking patients, so Mama San Ra-ab got in touch with the ambulance people.

Now, as I have said before, the Calgary Ambulance Service is quite definitely unsurpassed. The ambulance men are highly trained and courteous, not only that, they also have great consideration for a patient. I cannot too highly praise our ambulance men. I am sure that Cleo and Taddy Rampa ought to kiss each one of them and then they could say they had been kissed by Siamese cats which would bring a blessing to them, wouldn't it?

Soon there came the screaming of sirens which stopped with a choke as the ambulance braked outside the door. Very speedily two ambulance men came in carrying big black bags. They were not the ordinary ambulance men, they were paramedics and the paramedics are the best of the whole bunch. They asked a few questions and then did not bother to open their bags, instead they wheeled in their stretcher and put it beside my bed. With every care I was moved on to the stretcher, and then we went down in the elevator and out into the street where almost as quick as it is to tell I was put in the ambulance. Mama San Rampa sat in the front with the driver and the other paramedic sat beside me. I was fortunate in having a brand new ambulance. It was the first time it had been used and it still smelled a bit of new paint and new disinfectant.

We drove along the streets of Calgary, and I am not going to tell you the name of the hospital because, in my opinion, it is the worst hospital in Alberta, so let us call it St. Dogsbodys. That is as good or as bad a name as any. I could think of a very suitable name but I am afraid that my Respected Publisher would blush (CAN a Publisher blush?) and would want alterations made.

Soon the ambulance drove into what appeared to be a dark, dismal cavern. From my viewpoint, flat on my back, it seemed that I was being taken into an unfinished factory with a loading bay just to the side. It was darn cold there, too. But as soon as our eyes got used to the gloom the ambulance men took me out of the ambulance and wheeled me along a dismal corridor, and everyone I saw seemed to have a fit of the blues. I thought, "Oh goodness! They must have brought me to a Funeral Home by mistake."

Mama San Ra'ab disappeared somewhere into a crummy little office where she had to give all details about me, and then I was pushed into the Emergency Section which seemed to be a long hall with a few plated bars supporting curtains which were not always drawn, and then I was transferred to a sort of hospital cot thing in the Emergency Department.

One of the paramedics, knowing my difficulties, said, "Nurse, he needs a monkey bar." A monkey bar, by the way, is a thing that extends about three feet over the head of the bed and it has a triangular shaped piece of metal, plastic coated, depending from a short chain. It is to help paraplegics such as me raise themselves to a sitting position. I have had one for years, and I have always had one when I have been in hospitals, but this time when the paramedic said that I needed a monkey bar the nurse looked even more sour than normal and said, "Oh, he needs a monkey bar, does he? Well, he won't get one

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HERE!" And with that she turned and walked out of the little cubicle. The two paramedics looked at me sympathetically and shook their heads saying, "She's always like that!"

Now there came the period of waiting. I was stuck in this minute cubicle and each side of me there were other beds. I never got round to being able to count how many beds there were but I could hear a lot of voices, everyone was being made to discuss their problems and hear the answers in public. Some of the cloth screens were not drawn, and, in any case, they were open at the top and open at the bottom. There was no privacy at all.

There was one frightfully funny incident — funny to me. In the next bed to the right there was an old man, he had just been brought in off the street, and a doctor went in to him and said, "Oh grandfather, God, not YOU again? I told you to stay off the drink, you'll be picked up dead soon if you don't stay off the drink."

There came much rumbling and muttering and croaking, and then the old man burst out with a roar, "I don't want to be cured of the drink, damn you! I just want to be cured of the shakes!" The doctor shrugged his shoulders in resignation — I could see it all quite clearly — and then he said, "Well, I'll give you an injection, that will straighten you out for the time being and then you can go home, but Don't COME BACK HERE AGAIN."

Some minutes later, as I was lying on my hospital cot, a harassed nurse came skittering down the corridor. She dashed into my open cubicle and without a word to me — without even checking to see who I was or what I needed — she ripped back the sheet covering me, grabbed my pajamas and pulled, and jabbed a hypodermic into my unsuspecting rump. Then, almost without breaking stride, she yanked out the hypodermic, turned on her heel and was gone. Now this is absolutely true; I have ever since been wondering if I got the shot meant for the old drunk in the bed next to me.

No one told me what was going to be done, no one said a word to me, but all I know is I got a shot of SOMETHING straight into the — well, there may be ladies present, but you'll know where I was stuck.

Some time later a porter came and without a word to me just grabbed the end of the cot and started pulling me out.

"Where am I going?" I asked, quite reasonably as I thought. But he just glowered at me and pulled me along a long, long corridor. "You'll see when we get there," he said. "Mind you, I'm not an ordinary porter, I'm just helping out. Really I'm in—" and he mentioned another department.

I have always believed and always been taught that one of the duties of a doctor or nurse or anyone connected with treatment is to tell a patient why a thing is being done and what is being done, because, after all, it is quite a serious matter to stick needles into patients' posteriors and leave them wondering whatever it's all about.

We were going down the corridor and some sort of a clergyman was coming along. He saw me and he turned into a frozen-faced robot and averted his face. I was not one of his flock, you see, so he hurried off in one direction and I was pulled away into another.

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The bed-stretcher-cot stopped and a squeaky voice said, "That him?" The porter just nodded and walked away and I was left outside what proved to be the X-ray department.

Some time later someone came along and just gave my bed a push — like a locomotive shunting trucks — and I rolled into an X-ray room. The bed was pushed against the table and I was told, "Get on there." Well, I managed to get the top half of me on to the table and then I turned to a little girl who was there — I looked at her and wondered what such a young creature would be doing in such a place. She had on white stockings and her miniskirt was micro-mini-skirt and was right up to her — the place on which I had been poked, with a hypodermic. I said, "Do you mind lifting my legs on for me, I can't do it myself." She turned and looked at me in open-mouthed astonishment, then she said, very haughtily, "Oh no!" her tone turned to awe and reverence and she said, "I am a TECHNICIAN — I am not one to help you!" So it caused me extreme pain — pain amounting to agony even—but I managed to grasp my ankles with my right hand and pull them on to the table.

Without a word the TECHNICIAN just slammed about with her X-ray machine, setting buttons, etc., etc., and then she went behind a leaden-glass screen and said, "Breathe in —HOLD IT! Breathe out." I stayed there for about ten minutes while the film was developed, and then without a word someone came along and pushed the hospital bed back against a table. "Get in," she said. So again, with extreme effort, I managed to pull myself on to the hospital bed, after which this female pushed the bed out of the X-ray department and let it roll against a wall.

There was another wait and then eventually someone came along, looked at the card on the bed, and without a word pushed me back to the Emergency Department where I was slid into a cubicle just as one would push a cow into a stall.

Eventually after three or four hours I was seen by a doctor but it was decided they could not do anything for me, there was not a vacant bed in the hospital — except one in the Women's department. My suggestion that I would take that was not well received.

So I was told to go home again because there was nothing they could do for me and I would be "better off at home".

"You'll be looked after better there," said another one and, believe me, I needed no convincing on that.

Mama San Ra'ab had been sitting in a cold, cold waiting room on a hard seat the whole of the time feeling, I suppose, like a castaway on a desert island, but at last she was able to come in to the Emergency Department and then the ambulance was sent for to take me home. From here to St. Dogsbodys is one and a half miles, and from St. Dogsbodys back to my home was another one and a half miles, three miles in all, if I can multiply correctly. But that little useless trip cost seventy dollars, not the ambulance men's fault, but that is what the city charges for an emergency call.

So I am now looking for another place outside of Calgary, preferably in some other Province because I am devastated by the crudity of medical treatment in Calgary.

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I am shocked by the cost of things in the medical world in Calgary.

That brings me to another point. I believe that medicine should be practiced only by dedicated people. I believe there should be a weeding out of scrimshankers and shirkers among the patients because too many patients like to go to hospital emergency and sit in the waiting room as if it were a country club except that no country club was ever so uncomfortable. I also believe that doctors and nurses — yes, and even porters — should have more consideration for patients, and if they took the Golden Rule and practiced "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" then it wouldn't be such a bad world, after all, would it?

I would also have emergency departments where there was privacy because I heard the story of the old man to the right of me, and I also heard the story of the young woman to the left of me; she had what I can only delicately refer to as sex problems with her husband, and she had been a bit, let us say, torn. So the doctor examining her — who did not bother much about privacy either — was giving her advice in a loud voice and asking her the most intimate questions in a loud voice, and I am sure the poor woman was as embarrassed as I was.

But home again with Mama San Ra'ab, Buttercup Rouse, Cleo and Taddy I had "a call" to get busy and write another book, the seventeenth which has the title of "I Believe". Well, you know, I believe that this is a good point to finish the book, don't you?

THE END

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